

# HURRY UP AND WAIT!?

## BEYOND THE SCORE

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**Charlie Rush has a self-described “energy problem.” Interaction with the man and listening to the details as he recounts his life both reinforce the point. It’s quite appropriate that he changed his middle name almost thirty years ago to Hurry from Douglas. According to Charlie, it’s also “good for business.”**

Charlie’s wife of 16 years, Roz indicates that weekly dates during their courtship were perpetually intriguing but quite exhausting. Roz continuously wondered, “Is this guy for real?”

At 77, the man’s built like the distance runner that he is both literally and metaphorically. He has worked in the carpet business for almost 60 years, and still possesses seemingly boundless “go.” These factors have kept his mind very sharp as well.

He is also a fair chase big game hunter.

In July of 2008, I received a request to score an Alaska brown bear skull. The bear was taken in May near Wolf Lake on the Alaska Peninsula. As an Official Measurer (OM) for B&C since 2005, and living in North Carolina, I was excited to get such a call.

Charlie was confident that his trophy would make the records book. As an OM, I knew that the skull needed to measure roughly 16 inches long and 12 inches wide in order to meet the minimum score for the All-time B&C records book. Unlike many OM callers, Charlie was very well versed in the

measurement process, and was a fountain of knowledge about his favorite big game animal. The details he presented to me over the phone reinforced the likelihood that this was an outstanding brown bear.

However, the skull had been pressure washed and frozen before being shipped back to his home. As I reviewed my OM notes, I realized it would make good sense to confirm drying period requirements with a call and subsequent emails to Jack Reneau, Director of Big Game Records for B&C. Not surprisingly, a slight adjustment to the appropriate 60-day waiting period was in order.

After what was likely a painful, albeit brief delay for the man, Mr. Rush’s Alaska brown bear indeed made the All-time B&C records book with room to spare, at 28-7/16 inches.

Fast-forward (no pun intended) to 2015, when Charlie called on me to score another Alaska brown bear he’d taken. This time the hunt was on the Aliulik Peninsula on Kodiak Island in late April. My mind flashed back to Charlie’s 2008 visit. I then recalled how he’d mentioned sightings of even larger bears on previous trips, and commented on plans to pursue these

giants on subsequent hunts. Clearly, he was still at it. I had to ask myself, “Who is this guy, really?”

Charles Hurry Rush grew up on the outskirts of Dallas, Texas, during the years following World War II. Starting at about the age of ten, Charlie indicates that he essentially raised himself. When not in school, his free time passed largely unsupervised. He spent countless hours exploring the country and creeks around his family home. He fished, trapped, and occasionally caught snakes—including a few water moccasins. Fortunately, he was never bitten.

Charlie also owned a shotgun and became popular with some older, “rough” types who took him out for Hoover hog (armadillo and jackrabbit) hunting in the area. Wise beyond his years, he was also clever enough to stay out of the trouble that some of his acquaintances ultimately got into.

Adventurous and industrious, Charlie used his abundant energy to earn money starting as a youngster. He worked multiple paper routes, sold eggs, washed cars, and hauled broken washing machines to the local dump.



Charlie Rush has both bears on display. The first bear, taken in 2008 near Wolf Lake, Alaska, scores 28-7/16 points. His second, scoring 28 points, was harvested on the Aliulik Peninsula on Kodiak Island, Alaska, in 2015.

This column is dedicated to the system that supports the public hunting of public wildlife for all fair chase sportsmen, and the stories and trophies that are the result. Theodore Roosevelt strongly believed that self-reliance and pursuing the strenuous activities of hunting and wilderness exploration was the best way to keep man connected to nature. We score trophies, but every hunt is to some extent a way of measuring ourselves.

One day, while parallel parking cars for ladies in downtown Dallas (for 25 to 50 cents a pop) he walked by an upscale department store. In the display window stood a huge polar bear mount. At that point, Charlie began to dream about one day living in Alaska and hunting big bears.

Having married at an early age, and with four young sons to feed, Charlie had to wait a long time to actually

Official Measurer HP Giger (left) and Charlie Rush pose with Charlie's mule deer. This mule deer was taken by Charlie in 1967 while hunting in Eagle County, Colorado. The buck scores 198-7/8 points.



**SEE ALSO:**  
"Colorado Mule Deer by the Numbers," by Justin E. Spring in the Winter 2014 issue of *Fair Chase*.

*Boone & Crockett Club's 18th Big Game Awards, 1980-1982*, pages 16-18, and page 31 for photos and the hunt story of another Luark Ranch record buck—a 272-4/8" non-typical mule deer taken by Eddie Stephenson, Jr. in 1978.

## BEYOND THE BEARS

On October 22, 1967, Charlie took an outstanding typical mule deer. This was during the heyday of western deer populations. Charlie's hunt was not only in the top state for trophy mule deer, but in #1 ranked Eagle County, Colorado. To this day, as a county, Eagle ranks second in the country for the highest number of B&C records book entries for the species.\*

Charlie and an acquaintance he described as "a rather shady fellow with a big scar on his face" had driven from Dallas to the Luark Ranch in the northwest quadrant of central Colorado. The ranch trespass fee at the time was a great deal at only \$7.50 per hunter!

The two hunters had no prior knowledge of Colorado weather or high country conditions in October. They drove all night from Dallas to Burns. Neither had brought sleeping bags, and every night they just slept on the ground under their pickup truck.

The hunt itself took place near the ranch below King Mountain in an area surrounded by the White River National Forest. It was on the third or fourth day of the hunt, after taking the first buck of the two deer limit (at the time) that Charlie came up on this giant at roughly 50 yards. After two clean broadside misses, the deer took off running. The naturally energized hunter wasted no time in pursuing the buck at a full run himself.

After an initial quarter-mile sprint, Charlie was able to gather himself and sneak in to take a very close-range shot which mortally wounded, but did not kill the deer immediately. He was finally able to subdue it with the use of a knife, amongst sheer adrenalin and "a lot of dust."

Fellow Luark Ranch hunters viewed the aftermath from the mountainside above. In the heat of the moment, Charlie appeared to



be dragging the beast across a small flat at a running clip. We would expect no less from Charlie.

Back at the ranch, the exceptional mule deer buck's carcass scaled 261 pounds field-dressed. The missed shots were later attributable to a loose, swiveling scope mount. Not surprisingly, Charlie never hunted with that type of scope attachment again.

Charlie's jaw-dropping buck scores 198-7/8 B&C points. This great mule deer has amazing back forks, including greater than 19" G2s and greater than 14" G3s. In addition, the H1 circumferences stand out at 5-7/8 inches each.

I had a chance to see this deer recently. Charlie was not exaggerating when he said it made some elk he'd shot look comparatively scrawny. A gross score of 204-6/8 points helps enhance the mental picture of this deer's antlers, especially for trophy mule deer hunters. Also, when one considers that this buck's inside spread is only 19-3/8," with fairly short brow tines, it's easy to conjure up a lot of "if only" mental calculations that could easily have resulted in the deer scoring between 205 to 210 points typical!

Now, a taxidermist can do quite a bit to stretch the neck on a deer to meet the hunter's recollection of "how big it really was." However, in part because this buck's cape was huge to begin with, it's one of those rare deer that actually looks fairly normal on the mount. Normal, that is, until you put it next to another above-average mature mule deer or an average five-point or six-point bull elk mount!

# BEYOND THE SCORE

hunt big bears. Years of hard work building a carpet business with his younger brother to feed his family clearly came first. For well over a decade there was little time for any hunting.

Texas whitetail deer were the first big game animals Charlie hunted. In 1967 he went on his first out-of-state hunt to Colorado for mule deer. He took a whopper of a buck (see sidebar, *Beyond the Bears*).

Circumstances never quite played out for moving to Alaska. However, Charlie

made it at least part of the way. He ended up living in Bozeman, Montana, for nine years. Great game country, but not the far north wilderness he dreamed of.

In 1975, while living in Bozeman, he was able to go on the first of his five Alaska brown bear hunts. He has taken four brown bears in total since then.

When Charlie brought over his 2015 brown bear skull, the measurements confirmed that this was also a records book bear at exactly 28 inches. This time, he had the skull cleaned with the use of beetles, making the 60-day required drying period very straightforward math. The specimen was also closer to “museum quality clean.” This bear’s teeth were heavily worn, with many badly broken off. Older age class brown bears’ teeth tend to show significant wear and tear.

By that time I could not recall the details of Charlie’s 2008 hunt. However, in reviewing the entry materials, I was able to glean that the bear was taken on the morning of the second day of a 12-day hunt. Hunting with a .300 Weatherby Magnum, Charlie’s final shot was taken at 16 yards, or 54 feet! An article from the *Charlotte Observer*, dated August 31, 2008, included the following:

*“He was just coming out of hibernation and he was hungry,” said Charlie with a chuckle. “He was looking us over and definitely considered me and guide Danny Nicolai as a meal.”*

The 2015 brown bear hunt culminated at 5:20 p.m. on the next-to-last day of a 14-day hunt. Moderately overcast, raining, and at a temperature of around 40°F, the stalk for this bear lasted over

17 hours. As Charlie jokes, during that time he aged a year—spotting the bear and beginning the stalk at 76 and making the killing shot on his 77th birthday! To add to the excitement, the bear’s carcass was about to wash out to sea given a rising tide. Clearly it was no easy task to move such a hulking dead weight.

In fall of 2016, Charlie Rush has plans to visit the Luark Ranch near Burns, Colorado. His last visit there was in 1974. Since his epic first hunt, he made the trip several more times and became close friends with the Luark family. I could tell he was truly looking forward to returning to the Colorado high county.

Charlie’s always going and doing. But as life has a tendency to reveal itself, sometimes you just have to wait. If you work hard at it, there’s plenty to savor along the way as well. ■



Charlie Rush with his bears. Above, the claws of his 2015 Alaska brown bear. Right, with his first bear, taken in 2008, scoring 28-7/16 points.

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