

It was the very last day of my elk hunt; actually it was more like the last hour. I was shaking, unable to catch my breath and the adrenalin flowing through my veins had me so worked up I could not even speak. You know, the feeling that over comes you when you have just pulled the trigger and closed the deal on the dream hunt of your life. Every elk hunter I know talks and dreams of 400 inch class bulls and after many many years and many many miles I finally have one of my own. I believe this puts me in a very small group of hunters, one I am very proud to say I am a part of. The 400 club.

Joining this elite club was all made possible by the guys at Huntin Fool. About 3 years ago I was looking for a hunt for Mountain lion and maybe a bear. Please keep in mind that I am not your average hunter, in fact my mobility or lack thereof keeps me from being able to hunt places I could years ago. Jeff Waren referred me to an outfitter in the Gila Wilderness in South West New Mexico.

After talking with Matt Gilstrap of Extreme Hunting Adventures for awhile I knew I had found an outfit that could take care of me and my needs and I was on my way to New Mexico to hunt lion and bear. That was the first hunt I booked with Matt but definitely not the last. On this hunt I learned that Matt guides for numerous species across New Mexico and that Elk are on top his list.

I told him how badly I would like to go on just one more elk hunt where I would have a chance at a 400 inch bull. I did not have to have a 400 incher but just knowing that they are around would suit me. He told me he had just the place and that the terrain would not be too difficult for me and there might just be a possibility that someone in my shape might just get lucky.

It was the last afternoon of my hunt, and while sitting in this blind my mind kept flashing back to the morning hunt and the one that got away. It was still dark as the inside of a cow and we parked the buggy at a gate along the road and we just sat and listened. In a far distance you could hear several different bulls as the morning choir fired up like every morning before, Matt seemed to recognize each different bull. The reason we were parked in this particular location was that Matt glassed a big bull near here the evening before while I was by myself hunting from the blind. He said it was not a bull he had seen before and would sure like to get a better look at him. He did not think any of the bulls we could hear were him.

It was getting where I could start to see and Matt walked over by the steel gate and was glassing through his binos. Then he made a few cow calls and went back to glassing. Suddenly I realize Matt is standing right beside me whispering something I don't understand. Not only are my legs

about shot but my hearing is not what it used to be either. Then it finally gets through to me that he is saying, "Shoot him, He's right there"

And right there he was and as fast as I could blink he was gone. This is the last day; I'm running out of time. I asked how big he was and Matt said, "maybe about 350 or 360, pretty nice bull Larry". I could tell he was somewhat disappointed but just laughed and said, "don't worry we'll get a bigger one". I would have been a very happy hunter to take home a bull of that size. We tried to track him but his tracks went into the brush where it was impossible to walk.

As we approached the area the blind was at for what was to be my last afternoon of hunting Matt pointed out a huge rub in a juniper tree that had not been there yesterday. He said, "You know what that means Larry? That means a new Big Bull has taken over this waterhole and he was here last night.

Matt explained his plan of attack to try to get a chance at whatever had destroyed this tree. His plan was to leave me alone at the blind and he was going to go several hundred yards down below me and call. He said, "whatever happens do not shoot the guide".

I asked, "How am I supposed to know where you will be"?

He said, 'Just joking Larry, I will be a long way away hiding under a rock. You will hear me calling.

I had been there for a couple hours when I heard him call. But what seemed odd was that he was behind me, opposite from the direction I had last seen him. Then I heard him bugle again only closer. And then again and again and again and closer and closer. Now I was not sure if this was my guide or actually a bull coming. And it sounded big and I was starting to get nervous with excitement. And then silence for what seemed forever. Then out of the corner of my eye to my left I spot a huge cow not 20 yards from me. How the heck did she get that close, then another and another. I was so excited and so focused on these 3 cows, looking so hard that I did not realize the bull had walked up on the other side of my blind and he let out a blood curling sound that nearly made me jump straight up and run. HOLY ----, there he is, right there not 20 yards away and he is big, big, big. I could not move for fear he would spot me. My heart was pounding so hard I thought for sure he would hear it and spook. I think I was holding my breath. This is the moment we all dream about; this is why I love to hunt. A moment in my wonderful life of hunting that I shall never forget. The pictures tell the rest.

Thank You Garth and Jeff and Thank you Matt for taking an old man hunting. Larry Bonebright Lena, IL.