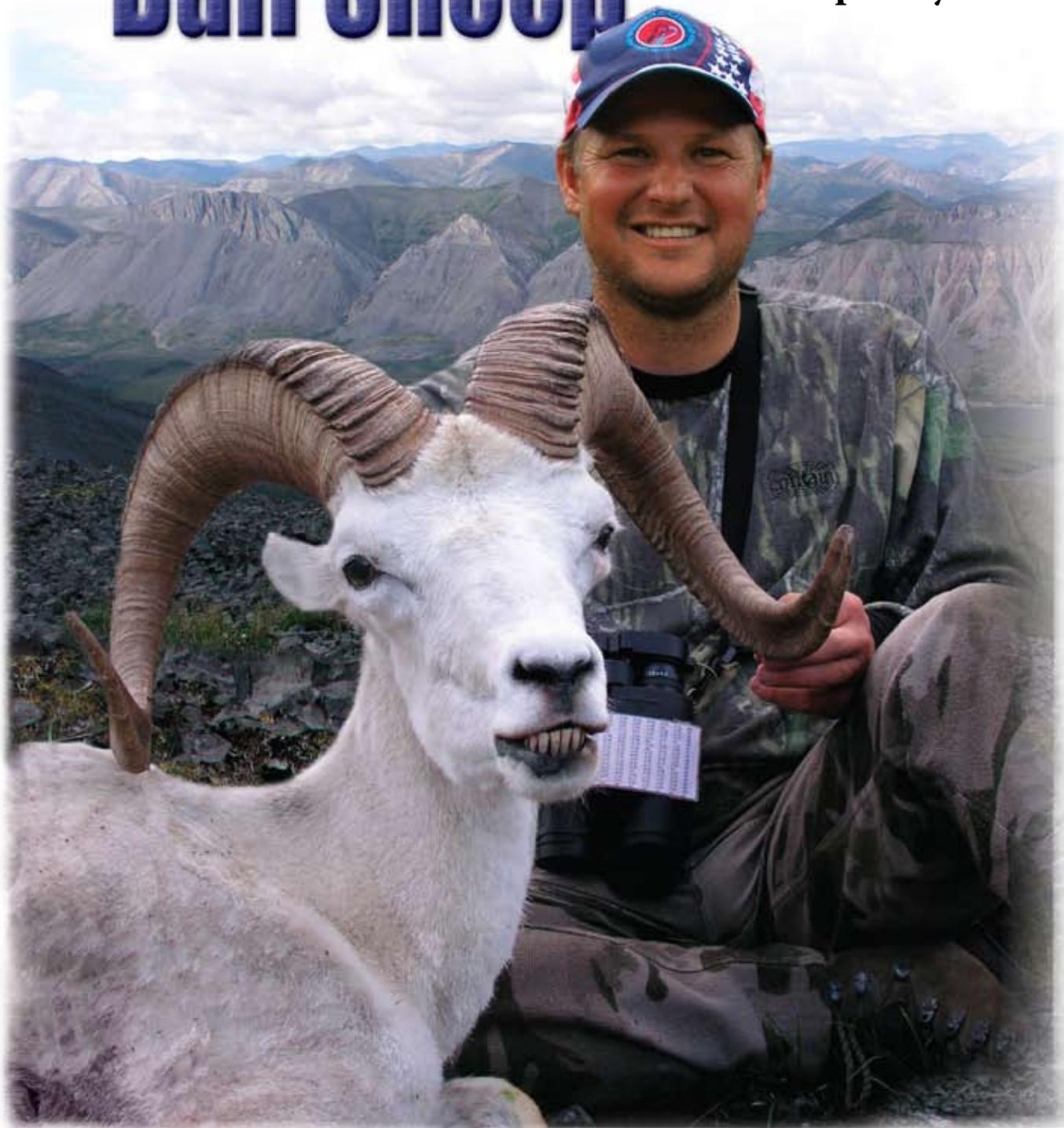


The 401k

Dall Sheep

Ram hunt worth the early withdrawal penalty.



Greg Bokash • Northwest Territories • 2006 • Guided



have wanted to hunt Dall sheep for a very long time but never could draw a tag for a limited area in Alaska, nor did I have the money to pay an outfitter. Since non-

residents are required to use an outfitter, I was left with few options. My first would be to move to Alaska and become a resident. The second choice would be to pay an outfitter or, thirdly, I could just never go Dall sheep hunting.

To be honest, my favorite choice would have been the first, but that likely would have left me with no wife and unable to afford even rabbit hunting. Not going at all didn't sit right with me either. It would take years to save the necessary funds for sheep hunting. I'm 40 years old and not getting any

younger. Also, the nuclear power plant I work at doesn't let you retire until you are just about dead and unable to climb mountains anymore.

I had a couple of outfitters I checked out in the Northwest Territories and settled on one I thought had the best area for a bowhunter. The next step was to call that 1-800 number to the 401k, pay the penalty and take the direct withdraw. Smart? Probably not, but I was going Dall sheep hunting and to me that was the important part.

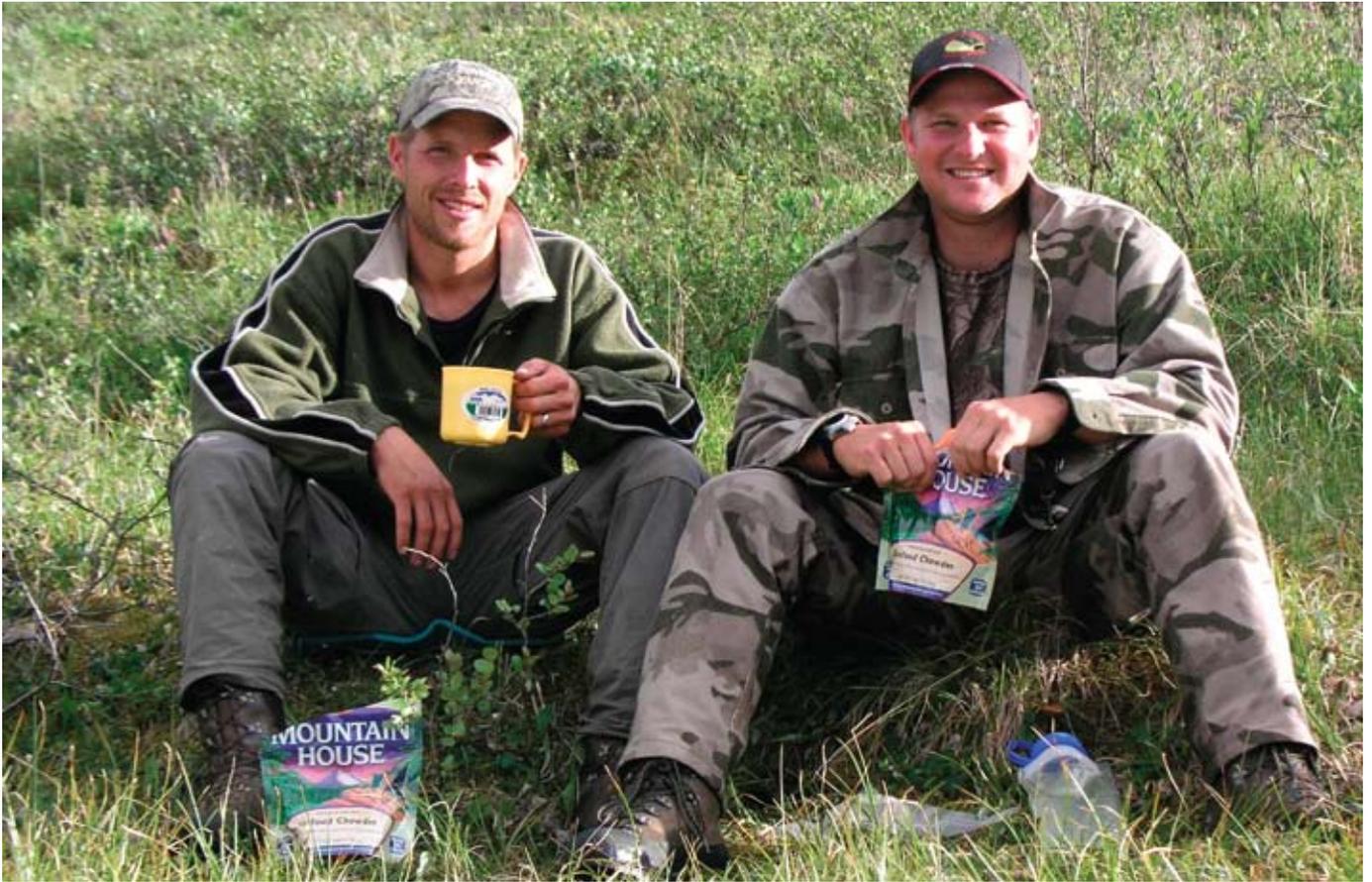
On July 13 I left my little town of Alloway, New Jersey. On the morning of July 16, I was sitting in my tent, waiting to get up for the first day of hunting. We were hoping it was hot and buggy; when the conditions are right, the sheep take shelter in some of the local caves. It would be a bowhunter's dream to catch them on the way out. We didn't see a single ram in those caves. Every day we climbed to the top of the mountain and

walked the edge, stopping periodically to spot for rams all the while being careful not to get silhouetted. We did that for 17 hours a day. During the first three days, all we saw each day were three to six ewes and one or two small rams. On the fourth day, as we were getting closer to the caves and cresting a hill, there was a ram just over the edge. He was legal, but surely was not a shooter to me. He was heavily broomed but probably didn't have 20-inch curls.

As we crested the mountain to the south on the fifth day we saw a ram that was full curl feeding with a smaller ram about 650 yards away. We sat and judged the larger ram, waiting for him to get into a better position for a stalk. He appeared to be seven and a half years old. Not a monster, but I would be happy harvesting him with a bow. The rams slowly moved into a gully and did not reappear. I figured they had bedded, so I eased the edge of the gully; there



A chopper was one means by which Greg made his journey from his home in New Jersey to the backcountry of the Northwest Territories



Greg and his guide, Russ, had to hunt hard to find a good ram among rocks, caves and thick cover.

were no sheep. They were gone. Eight hours later Russ, my guide, spotted them about three-quarters of a mile away at the bottom of the mountain, heading up. For the next four hours we went through the maze of rocks and boulders trying to find that big ram. Unable to find him, we headed back to the top and waited for him to show himself.

Finally, at 1:00 a.m., he appeared, climbing up the next hill away about 600 yards away. At that time of the year it

is light almost around the clock, except for the hours between 2 and 4 a.m. We had not eaten all day and needed to get some rest if we were going to be able to hunt hard the next day. When we got back to camp Werner had done an airdrop and there was plenty of fresh meat and homemade cookies. When you hunt hard all day, nothing is better than the sight of the tent getting nearer and knowing there is a fresh airdrop of goodies.

The sixth day was the same as the first three days. I must admit that by the seventh day, the outcome of the previous six was working on me. Spirits were a little on the low side. We decided that on the last day we would head south, since we had been seeing the most animals in that direction. The morning was a little on the chilly side and very windy. After four hours on the mountain I told Russ, "Let's head back to camp and get some coffee and eat an early lunch." After about an hour and half, we felt guilty about just sitting there. I told Russ we had to check out the caves one last time. As I stood above one cave entrance, Russ went around and peeked inside.

“For the next four hours we went through the maze of rocks and boulders trying to find that big ram.”

I patiently waited for the signal as he eased over the hill. Then same signal he had given me all week, both hands in the air to signal “nothing.” I took my pack off and sat there, looking through my binoculars until Russ got back over to me. Russ sat down and put his binoculars to his face and looked the same direction I had just been looking. He saw a ram laying on a rock a couple of miles away back to the south. We threw our packs on and hauled butt, trying to get a better look before he got up. At 80 yards Russ had the spotting scope out, trying to judge him as I moved in closer. The plan was he would give me a “thumbs up” if the ram was a



The 45 Minute Elk Hunt

I started putting in for a limited draw unit in Wyoming three years ago and finally drew in 2006. In Wyoming, you apply for elk tags in January and usually get draw results by the last week of February. I immediately called my buddy Davy Nacey to tell him the good news. My wife didn't seem as excited since I already had the Dall sheep hunt planned for July and an antelope hunt for August. Kim knows the love I have for hunting and usually supports me. I hope she continues to do so. Davy and I were trying to pick a date that would work with our busy schedules. I for sure wanted my buddy there when I got a chance to harvest my first Wyoming elk. We decided that we would be able to get away for a few days, starting on September 18.

The morning of Sept 18 was not the perfect elk hunting morning; it was very windy, but we were going to try anyway. We arrived at the ranch way before daylight and couldn't hear a thing with all the wind. After it got light we checked out a couple canyons and saw around 10 cows, a spike and a bull that would go around 300 P&Y in the second canyon about, 500 yards away. Davy looked at me and said, "He is no monster for this area, but he would be a very nice first bull." Since we didn't hear any other bulls bugling and it was so windy I said, "Let's get closer and get a better look." The elk were slowly moving up the bottom of the canyon so we ran around the upper edge, hoping to drop down in front and above them. When we dropped back down into the canyon, they were about 150 yards away. The bull was a little better than we first thought. I told Davy, "Let's go get 'em, he looks big enough to me." That was the point where the "game face" came out and it was game on! We headed back to the top and moved further up the canyon. As we dropped back down into the canyon again, the bull bugled and Davy had him pinpointed. Davy began to ease over the rock and saw antler tips at 10 yards away. He looked at me and started waving his arms with excitement. He was silently mouthing, "Get ready he is 10 yards away, 10 yards away, 10 yards away! Get ready, get ready, get ready."

A cow was the first to appear from



behind the rock. At 30 yards she stopped and looked at me for a few seconds. She kept moving and didn't pay any attention to me. The big boy was next. When he got in the wide open, Davy cow called and the bull stopped and looked at me. I settled in on a spot behind his shoulder and released the arrow just as he started to walk. My arrow hit him further back than I had intended. He ran 150 yards and stood behind a spruce tree. We kept watching to see what he was going to do. The big six-by-six took one step forward and we could see through our binoculars that there was a big puddle of blood underneath him. We knew he was hurt badly, but I needed to get another arrow in his vitals. Slowly, I snuck in on the hard hit bull and placed a follow up shot right through the boiler house. The bull

went 45 yards further before falling into the stream.

That's right, a stream with mud that came up to the center of his body. After we did our high fives it was time to get that big bull out. It was 45 minutes from the time we started hunting until the time I shot him. Getting him out of the stream and packed back to camp took much longer. Retrieving a 700 pound bull from a muddy stream isn't the easiest thing to do. However, with some help, we got 'er done.

It couldn't have worked out any better – getting my first bull on the first day, within 45 minutes and with my buddy there. You've got to take advantage of the opportunity when it presents itself, because it doesn't happen like that very often.



Greg and his buddy, Davy Nacey, were all smiles when Greg arrowed this bull after a quick, intense hunt.



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GREG'S EQUIPMENT:

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BUCK KNIVES GEAR GIVEAWAY:

Greg will receive an "X-Tract Multi Tool" from Buck Knives for his story. For details, see page 103.

shooter. I eventually eased up to 27 yards undetected and at a 35-degree angle. Russ gave me thumbs up. It was game on! All I could see of the ram was neck and head, so I had to wait until he stood up, about a half hour later. He started getting restless and as he started to stand I went to full draw, put the pin behind his shoulder and released. The ram jumped about 20 yards downhill and was gone. I tried to stand but my legs were asleep, so I kept falling down.

After I got feeling back in my legs we went looking for blood. The ram had gone about 80 yards down the mountain and piled up. Russ and I got some pictures and packed him back to camp. On a personal note, my sister-in-law died of cancer this year at the age of 31, leaving behind a husband and two young children. I'm only telling you, all the readers of EBJ, this to remind you that life is too short and you can't take it with you. Cherish every moment.

I would like to give special thanks to my wife, Kim, and my children, Hunter and Cody, for standing behind me in what I love to do. I also want to thank my friend and buddy for the great times we have had hunting together. A good hunting partner is hard to find, and he is one of them. Remember, "If you don't put in you'll never draw." 

A careful stalk got Greg to within about 27 yards of his ram, giving him a clean killing shot.

