



Donahoo's 'Bucket List' Big Horn

Submitted by Mickey Donahoo

Heading up Mickey's bucket list ever since he was about 6 was the Desert Bighorn Sheep. Reading magazine articles and other writings only served to heighten his desire to hunt this trophy; however, in Mickey's mind, hunting the desert sheep was never really a viable possibility. The fact that it is one of the North American Grand Slam was not even in the consideration. It was just the hunt of this sheep!

Even though he had taken three North American sheep -- the Dall, Rocky Mountain Bighorn and the Stone Sheep, Mickey decided his dream of sheep was complete; however, the Desert Bighorn still haunted him. Then came the call that a cancellation might just bring the ram within reach and the dream was on again. Plans began for a trip to Mexico to hunt the mountains for the Bighorn.

The Desert Bighorn is one of four North American sheep that make up the North American Grand Slam.

Two are known as thin horned sheep -- the Stone and the Dall -- and the other two are known as big horned sheep -- The Rocky Mountain and the Desert. The Desert Bighorn lives in the rugged mountains of Mexico and several of the southwestern states of the U.S. All of the desert sheep hunts in the U.S. are by drawing only and Mickey applied for years before finally giving up. The permits are still on a drawing basis today but with a point system. Mickey would not live long enough to accrue enough points for a hunt in the U.S.

Mickey would have preferred to hunt the sheep in 2016-2017, but when the notification of a cancellation came, it was too good to pass up. His biggest concern was his ability to still climb the sheep mountains at age 73 -- he still remembers the sheep mountains in Canada. Mickey was given the choice to hunt a free ranging sheep in the mountains or take an easier hunt in the flatter land under high fence. He chose to hunt the sheep in its natural habitat, on its own terms.

A ten day hunt was scheduled to begin in mid-February in the state of Sonora, Mexico, just 60 miles from the Gulf of Baja in the Chinos Mountains. The plan was to drive close to the base of the mountains and glass for sheep. Eight rams were seen on the first day but none were the quality desired. Mickey was relieved because he didn't want his long anticipated



Mills County hunter and taxidermist Mickey Donahoo is pictured above on the left with his 'Bucket List' Desert Bighorn ram.

hunt to end so quickly.

However, before sun up on the second day, they had a lone ram spotted high up on the mountain. A stalk was planned, but it had to wait until the ram bedded down during the heat of the day. The climb started at 10:00 and the team -- Mickey and two guides -- were in place four hours later. Now the wait began for the air to cool and the ram to move.

About 4:00, the ram got up and fed into view and it was the time Mickey had waited for. The ram was confirmed to be very good and quite old, and Mickey made the shot that brought down the ram. The team was able to reach the sheep after an hour's climb. Meanwhile, the rest of the team at the foot of the mountain began their climb to the ram for pictures, field dressing and to pack it out. The team at the bottom of the mountain had watched the entire hunt, including the stalk and taking the ram, through binoculars.

The ram was packed out, Mickey prepared the hide for mounting and the cape and horns were taken to the Mexican wildlife authorities for recording, testing and tagging. The CITIES permit to import into the U.S. has been applied for and the trophy will be shipped to Mickey as soon as all requirements are in order.

Following the successful return to the vehicles and unknown to Mickey, the guides spoke to Doris with a comment about Mickey -- "He walks just like us in the mountains." I know in Mickey's mind that the success of the hunt is measured by the following criteria -- not necessarily in the order presented:

- The taking of the sought after trophy
- Proof to himself that he can still do what it takes (on the hunt he competes with no one else, only himself)
- For the guides to indicate it was a pleasure to hunt with him and would like to do it again
- To take the trophy on its own terms.

Mickey isn't sure what major event is still in his bucket, but I'll bet he finds one as soon as he sorts through it. His philosophy is that your bucket list is never exhausted as long as you are alive.