



Chasing a Lifelong Dream

By Patrick A. Riley, Poway, Calif.

The lodge was tucked away among the trees at the bottom of a draw and hardly visible until I was within a few hundred yards. There was a small creek running by it that spilled into four trout ponds. It was early in September and the leaves were changing. The oaks and aspens filled the hillside with color. It had rained some that morning and the smell in the air, combined with the scenery, made me feel like I was in the middle of a hunter's paradise.

So began my first guided hunt. I'm getting up in years and I figured it was

When I got back on my horse, it hit me that I was living a lifelong dream—riding back into elk country to hunt a trophy bull.

about time I went on the trophy elk hunt of which I had dreamed for so long. I was in the mountains just outside the town of Liberty, Utah, on the 10,000-acre Broadmouth Canyon Ranch (801-745-1912; www.utahelkhunt.com) in the heart of some of the nation's best elk country.

I got settled in and walked outside to

take a better look at the slopes on both sides of the lodge. It didn't take long before I spotted some rather large bulls about a half mile away on the slopes. I was overcome with the feeling that in the morning I would embark on the hunt of a lifetime.

My guide, Eric, and I were up early. We ate breakfast and laid out our hunting plan. Once daylight began to break, we saddled up the horses and headed toward the area we wanted to hunt. We rode up the creek beds in the bottoms to a point several hundred yards below some waterholes. We tied off the horses and hiked up a drainage on the ridge opposite

the waterholes. We spotted about 20 elk around the waterholes, so we found a comfortable place to sit and glassed them for bulls. We did not see any shooters.

After we had glassed a while longer, we heard a bull bugle above us, followed by another bugle behind our location. We slowly turned and found just the

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antler tips of the one above us; the one behind was over the ridge, out of sight. The elk bugled back and forth a few times and we finally got a better peek at the one above us. The bull looked like a big 6x6. Both elk stopped bugling, so my guide decided to try to take a look at the one hidden over the ridge. My guide was slowly working his way to it when he looked down the ridge to the area we had climbed, and he noticed that the bull that had been above us was now working its way below our location. My guide slowly worked his way back to me, informed me of the bull's new position and said it was much bigger than we had thought—a real nice trophy. We worked our way down the ridge and set up a spotting scope. When I got a look at the bull's rack, I said, "That is the one I want."

I got into a comfortable shooting position and we watched the bull work its way down toward a small clearing about 130 yards away. Once the bull got close to the clearing, I chambered a round. A minute later, the bull entered the clearing and turned broadside. I was using my favorite rifle—a 7mm Rem. Mag. loaded with 175-grain Nosler Partitions—and when the bull turned I hit him just behind the shoulder with my first round. It hunched down a little and just stood there, so I hit the bull again in about the same spot. The second round put him down.

When I got down to the elk, I could not believe my eyes. The bull was bigger than I thought. We moved it to a good spot for photos, then we field dressed it and went back down the slope for the horses. When I got back on my horse, it hit me that I'd just lived a lifelong dream—riding a horse into elk country to hunt a trophy bull. It was a wonderful hunting experience. I will cherish the photos, stories and the trophy elk mounted on my living room wall for the rest of my life. **ah**

American Hunter (ISSN 0092-1068) is published monthly by the National Rifle Association of America, 11250 Waples Mill Road, Fairfax, VA 22030-9400; 703-267-1000 for the benefit of its members. Membership dues (U.S. and possessions) \$35 a year, \$85 for 3 years, \$125 for 5 years, \$3.75 per year is designated for a magazine subscription. For foreign postage add \$5 a year in Canada and \$10 elsewhere. Membership inquiries only 877-672-2000. Copyright 2009, the National Rifle Association of America. All rights reserved except where expressly waived. Periodicals Postage paid at Fairfax, VA, and at additional mailing offices.

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