



My First Bear With a Bow!

Every one can remember their first. Their first kiss, first car, first buck and well, you get the point. I have been hunting for long time and have taken half a dozen bears, including one 1/8" shy of B & C. But I have to tell you, the rush of the first one taken with a bow merits inclusion in the "firsts" of all time.

Like all stories, this one has a beginning at the 2006 ATA in Atlanta. Paul and I were lucky to get inside to promote the revolutionary supplement Sportsmen's Edge. While in the Robinson Outdoors, Inc booth, we met numerous hunting all stars and were amazed at what down to earth folks these people were. No Hollywood in hunting celebrity, just regular folk. After autographs and discussions about how Sportsmen's Edge was working to help them improve their hunting, we were infected with enthusiasm to give bow hunting a try. Paul had done so decades ago, but I hadn't picked up a bow since I last held a yellow plastic recurve at day camp.

Luck was with us that week big time. Mr. Rich Walton of www.Bowhunting.net stopped by the booth and expressed an interest in The Hunt Doctors providing hunting related medical information on his popular, growing web site. He asked us about bowhunting and could see we were chomping at the bit. A few months later, a really cool BowTech Allegiance was in each of our hands.

Outfitted by local legend Tom Jeffries, this was no camp plastic recurve! A Venom Peep-Sight, Tru-glo pin set, Carbon Express arrows, topped with NAP Razorcaps made this a state of the art machine. Now my interest was really wide open. I began to read all I could about bows and bowhunting. Cameron Hayes the do-it-yourself guru had written an article explaining the virtues of daily practice of 12 to 18 arrows. I took him at his word, having been impressed with his skills and I began daily practice.

Soon I was setting up a tree stand in the back yard to practice a more realistic set up. Gradually my abilities improved. After a couple of months and literally around 80 practice sessions, I was getting kind of good. A planned hunt to Vancouver Island loomed ahead and I was ready. Then, crash, it fell apart.

The outfitter there on Vancouver Island said that the bush was just too thick and that the likelihood of losing an arrowed bear was too great. He said that that we needed to leave the bows at home. I was bummed out. However, nothing fixes being bummed out like hunting for a week and taking a monster bear that squared an honest 7'6" with a 20 7/8" skull. Still I wanted to put a stick in a bear!

Deer season opened August 15th and I was in a tree. I saw a few bucks and does over the next couple of weeks that were easy freezer content if I had a rifle. But they never came close enough for the bow. I was now realizing what a P & Y animal was really about. I kept up my practice and was looking forward to another trip to British Columbia in September. This time the outfitter said it was ok to take the bow, but that if the bear was hit and then lost, oh well, that's "your one tag".

Our guide had never seen a bear taken with a bow, but he was up for anything. In fact several guides said the same thing. But as a life long hunter and professional fisherman, Chris was an extreme type of guide. He preferred back pack sheep hunting to anything else and was in "sheep shape". We packed our bows onto his boat, along with what seemed like everything including the kitchen sink, and away we went to the middle of beautiful and empty southern Moresby Island, part of the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia.

We saw nature at its best. Daily we saw flocks of Bald eagles, seals, Sea Lions, zillions of Salmon of all kinds fighting to get upstream in the "fish creeks". We saw bear sign everywhere, but oddly very few bears. The bears had an open kitchen of berries and fish and were always in the place we weren't. On a 2 on 1 guided hunt with targets on Sitka Black tail and Black Bear it was sometimes hard to focus on what to do next. The deer would be easy to get. It seemed as they were thick as fleas in the slashes (cut over) and did not possess White tail savvy.

On day 6 of the 8 day hunt after another day of strenuous hunting, we all took a seat for a brief rest on the side of a deactivated road. Deactivation is where the forest company comes in and rips out hundreds of culverts and cuts the road into a deep V so water can drain. Hundreds of 20 foot wide, 20 foot deep V's in the road with each V, wet, slippery and characterized by unstable rocks. Paul, got a weird feeling and stalked back down the road and came back to me whispering "get your bow".

I heard 'get your camera' and a few minutes passed before I realized what was up. There was a bear on the edge of the road. Not a P & Y, but a typical bruin for the area. Chris immediately hiked up into the near vertical slash to overlook and make sure the bear wouldn't get lost. Paul and I began the stalk.

As I got close, at about 50 yards, the bear saw us and took off. First a trot with me trotting, then a run and I am running as well. Finally I saw a deactivation cut ahead. As the bear went down hill I ran as fast as my worn out body could go and cut the distance to 25 yards when the bear emerged again on the edge of the road. The bear wheeled around and leapt up into the bush. Down and up I went and when I came to the top of the "cut" the bear was gone. Well, not actually.

Paul had followed and had a different angle. He could see the bear and when he called out to me, the bear started to focus on Paul. That was the break I needed. I inched down the road edge and was able to get the bear in sight. He was in the slash about 20 feet above the road, but not too deep. There was an opening and I had a shot into the chest. The whap of the BowTech, Carbon Express, NAP combo was followed by a howl and a crash through the bush up into the dense tree fall of the slash. Chris began to yell "I've got him" and Paul and I began a slow climb trailing blood.

The look out strategy really worked out. It would have taken forever, if ever, to find that bear if Chris hadn't taken a high vantage point. The bear was recovered as it began to rain (a British Columbia tradition) and pictures were taken hastily. My first Bow bear ranks up at the top of my hunting memories. My rifle collection can be heard crying a mile away from loneliness!

