

Breaking Forty In The Alaskan Tok By Tim Krause

The adventure began last January at the ECFNAWS convention in Lancaster PA, where my good pal Gordon Rockefeller was high bidder on the Tok management area sheep tag. Since he was a bit busy with the "foreign" sheep at the moment, & being the great buddy he is, he graciously allowed me to take the tag off his hands!! Since my main rifle hadn't been shooting up to "snuff", he also offered me the use of his "pet" 270 ! (now that's what you call a friend!) Having shot Gordon's rifle before I know what a real "tack driver" it is, so I accepted his offer.

I booked the hunt with Matt Snyder, of Alaska Hunting Adventures. Matt, his step father Frank Entsminger & his mother Sue, have a small personal outfitting business which has become synonymous with big rams in the Tok! I flew into Fairbanks, where I thought it more fitting for the over all experience if I took a bus to Tok. I'd be able to view the scenery along the way much better than by driving a car & it was considerably cheaper!

Matt was there to greet me upon my arrival. We picked up my tag, ran a few errands, then headed to Frank's place as that was to be the base of operations. That evening, we got our packs set, & the rifle sighted in. Frank was to be my guide, so right off the following morning Matt flew us into our hunting area. It was a real treat to fly in Matt's small plane, as not only is he a great pilot, he went out of his way to show me animals along the way!

Matt had done an excellent job of pre-scouting, as I had two 40inch rams in the same bunch waiting for me!! We had flown in three days before season to "try" & pattern these rams, as they lived in a place only eagles dared go!

The first day we "hacked" our way through some alder brush, to get up the mountain across from the rams to

get a good vantage spot to watch them. I was glad Frank & Sue had cut most of this trail when they were checking these rams out the week before or I think we'd still be cutting a trail up that mountain!

We discovered the rams were leaving the cliffs for a snack in the evenings, just low enough that a stalk would be within reason! We got off the mountain just at dusk, so had to set up camp in a creek bed. Since it was obvious, with all the Grizzly sign around, that the creek was a travel route, we were a bit edgy that night!

So with a short night, we headed off to get on the same mountain as the sheep. That meant walking two miles in ten inch boots up a glacier stream that was mostly eleven inches deep, and because of the unusually hot weather (was in the 80's) the stream got deeper as the minutes past!

Frank picked out a perfect spot to camp that night, although you wouldn't have wanted to roll out of bed! We got a terrific view of the rams from that position, they came as close as 600 yards! So we really scrutinized the two big fellas.

Of course, on opening day they decided to change things up a bit & pinned us down all day, then in the evening headed down the range farther. We figured it best to pick up camp & get ahead of them, as this would also get the wind back in our favor. As we were standing back in that glacier stream, looking for a place to camp, and feeling confident we were ahead of them, we looked up and saw one of the 40inchers staring at us from the cliff above! Frank just said FREEZE! and it worked!! The ram stared for a bit then walked off. The trouble was, the other three rams with him decided to take a - peak over the edge and weren't so amused, as they bolted out lickety-split! Figuring the rams were sure to head back up into the cliffs & stay there for the

remainder of the hunt, we felt pretty dejected as we set up camp that night.

The next morning we headed up the mountain behind camp to see if we might relocate the rams up in the rough, hoping they would at least be on our side of the mountain, when to our surprise, we bumped into them at less than fifty yards! We saw them before they spotted us & snuck into position. Trying to keep as low a profile as possible, I pushed the muzzle of the rifle through the rocks and got lined up on the best ram. (what a view at about 35 yards!) As I was ready to fire, it dawned on me that there might be a rock in the way of the muzzle, and there was! But as I was readjusting, BOOM! - Since I had a gloved finger through the trigger guard, I didn't feel the pressure on the light trigger! Oh well, had to make it sporting I guess?" and after all, if I had shot the ram there, I think he would still be rolling! We sprinted up the mountain (more like a slow motion jog) Lucky for us it was pretty rough as the rams had a couple of very deep cuts in their path and had to run about half a mile just to get 250 yards away from us! I had an almost straight -away shot as they broke out, Frank yelled "lead ram" and I redeemed myself!!!

What a swing of emotion from feeling all was lost the evening before to being ecstatic!!!! What a thrill it was to walk up to such a beautiful ram, 41 1/2, tipped on both sides & very symmetrical!!

Since it was only a bit after eight in the morning, and was a beautiful day, we took our time with the ram, just relishing the moment! The ram had a gorgeous cape for that time of year, probably because he came from a glaciated area, so we took the whole cape for a life size mount. I can't describe how careful & meticulous Frank was with the cape, both in the field & back in his shop!

(absolutely a fantastic job! Thanks again Frank)

That night, after we set up camp, we got to lay back & through the spotting scope watched the other 40 inch ram until dark. He & his buddies had returned to the safety of the cliffs. What a perfect end to a perfect day!! The next day we packed out. Back we went, through the eleven inch glacier creek with my ten inch boots! As we headed down, the marmots started to whistle at us, which just made the smile I had even bigger, with a great set of horns strapped to my pack, their whistling was now music to my ears!

Both Matt & Sue had been successful guiding their hunters to 39inch rams on opening day, in the open area they hunt. So Sue came in & helped us pack out the ram! - Packed out her ram the day before, then came in & helped with mine. She is quite a gal!!

Matt had some business that needed tending to that day, so didn't come in till late, but then we had another enjoyable flight back to Frank's.

What a fantastic hunt!! Those that know Frank, know just how multi talented he truly is. So



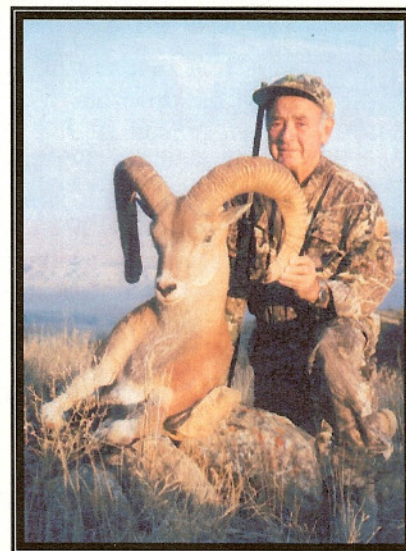
Afghan Urial in Eastern Turkmenistan

by Dan Amatuzzo

when it comes to sheep hunting, it's no surprise that he is a legend in his own time. It was a real pleasure just talking with him & being able to "pick" his brain. All the years worth of knowledge he has gathered about this area, & his basic know how about sheep, has been passed along to Matt & Sue. So I doubt anyone could do it better!!

THANKS SO MUCH GUYS!! and of course none of this would have been possible for me without my pal Gordy! THANKS BUD!! If you look closely at the photos, you may have noticed the haze from the forest fires that were just north of Tok. The smoke did get a bit thick at times. It was so bad the day I left, that the bus was running very late for its arrival in Tok. Since I would miss my flight in Fairbanks if I continued to wait, Frank was good enough to drive me all the way to the airport! Talk about service! Trip of a lifetime!!!!

P.S. For the Guys: If you happen to see Sue at the show, ask her about her poster!!



September 26, 2004

My second hunt of the year was for Afghan Urial in Eastern Turkmenistan.

For my fourth overseas hunt not counting Mongolia, I was accompanied by Jim Chase from Granby, Colorado. We had met during our Kamchatka Bighorn hunt several years ago and this was our fourth hunt together. Jim and I harvested not only the Kamchatka bighorn together but the Okhotsk, Transcaspiian Urial and now for the Afghan Urial.

Jim and I met at JFK International on Sept. 1st for our first leg of our flight to Frankfurt, Germany, then on to Baku, Azerbaijan on the East Coast of the Caspian Sea and then on to Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. After a grueling time with customs and not knowing if I would be able to bring my rifle along, the matter was resolved at about 3:30am and off we go to the hotel for a two hour