

Seth's 1st Bobcat!

It's a long story so bear with me or scan through...might be best to print if you want the whole story as it's 3 pages...a few of you have asked for details and it's easier than having 10 long phone conversations...plus this email will go in Seth's memory journal so I want to capture most of the experience...most of you know he is my only son...9 years old...and in my very biased opinion is a wonderful boy...a true gift from God...I love to fish and like to hunt...Seth is the exact opposite...loves to hunt and shoot anything at anytime and likes to fish...so it appears a lot more hunting is in my future...

I bought a guided bobcat hunt at the CCA Auction last year...Terry Larimer was the outfitter...did not know him but he came highly recommended...we left for Terry's house outside of Prineville early on Friday January 29, 2010...we had a great trip thru Sisters and Bend for short visits with friends and family...knew it was going to be a great trip when we stopped in Sisters and Seth hopped out of the truck at Mr. Duncan's house and immediately pointed out (correctly) turkey tracks and deer tracks in the snow in the driveway...arrived Prineville late evening...awoke at 4am Saturday to what Terry described as near perfect conditions...2" of fresh snow...untouched by anything other than God's creatures in the night...as we drove through Post (learned it was named after a literal post- which indicates the geological center of Oregon) towards the ranches we were hunting the snow began to yield more tracks...as we arrived in the "area" it was perfect...tracks everywhere...rabbits, coyotes, bobcats, deer...and then we cut a track of a mountain lion...all the tracks were fresh and some were "hot"...made within the last few minutes...

Terry had arranged for a few guys to help Seth and I locate tracks and run the tracks out when necessary...his son 15 year old son Jarron (already an old veteran at this game)...best friend Jeff...and other enthusiast and friend Brandon...all super nice guys...professional and friendly...and very interesting guys on the radio...I would have to tell that story in person...but suffice to say I learned what "42 over walker back" means...or something along those lines...it was pretty funny...

We cut our first bobcat track after having to chain up to get up a snow filled hillside with ice underneath...Seth was a little nervous about the bumping and sliding near the edge but never complained...after we cut the track...turned out the dogs...and the cat treed pretty quickly...it was up a pretty decent hill...so Terry drove us to the top and away we went...should be easy I thought...boy was I mistaken...after we hopped out the truck Seth looked at me as if to ask we could pray for our time...a look only a mom or dad knows...and that was an amazing honor and privilege to do so and I am not ashamed to say my boy is shaping up to be a much better man than me in about every category...so pray we did and then off into the snow to get our first cat...we arrived at the tree but the dog and cat were gone...Terry picked up the duo running towards an area with rock piles (he knows the area like the back of his hand)...so back to the truck and away we went...again, the cat stopped...up yet another the hill we went...mind you, each step you sink to your lower shin in powder...so Seth was sinking to his knee at times...up the hill 300 yards...last 50 yards was rim rock...he scooted right up it...never whining about the physical difficulty...in fact, he beat me up there...once we got up there we found our



cat...hiding in an inaccessible rock cave...of course Seth was alive with excitement and did not want to leave but it was a no go with no access or way to retrieve the cat if we shot it...

While we were chasing that bobcat...the other guys cut a mountain lion track...and away they went...they treed her...when we arrived we had to snowshoe in to track her to the tree...another first for Seth...he did it naturally...again, I was amazed at how easy this was coming to him...we got to the tree for our 1st in person encounter with a mountain lion...a 80-90lb female...as only Seth would do...he immediately grabbed snow...made a snowball and tried to hit the mountain lion...we couldn't shoot her so Seth decided the next best thing would be to tell her to come down and then throw snowballs at her...suffice to say, she was not amused...as a side note, I cannot adequately express what amazing physical specimens they are in person vs a picture or on tv...the aura they exude...the icy stare...the rippling muscles...the curled lip, the long whiskers...the beauty...I could have looked at her all day long...but we had a bobcat to find so away we went...



After a long delay talking with Uncle Jed...a local rancher...where I had to explain (several times) to Seth that over here time is not viewed like in the city and it's just what you do...(he was dying to get back on the hunt)...finally, the chat with Uncle Jed is over...and shortly thereafter, Terry cuts another bobcat track...did I mention he has amazing eyes for this stuff...we had seen hundreds of tracks over several miles at this point...and he quickly, easily and expertly identified species, age of track, direction...truly great stuff and Seth was like a sponge soaking the info up...

However...this time the tracks were crisscrossing an entire basin...up a hill...through rockpiles...Terry spent the next hour sorting this mess of tracks out...found where the cat exited the area...and away goes the dogs...a short time later the bays of the dogs indicate they are on the cats trail...but not where we thought it would be...with a new pup in the mix terry was not 100% convinced they had the right track...and when it appeared the cat was treed he was not 100% convinced the cat was really in the tree...now once a cat is treed in rugged, snow filled country it's not as easy as just walking up to the tree and looking in the tree to find the cat...this cat was 400+ yards up a 20' pitch hill in nice deep snow with no packed or groomed trail...walking to the top was a serious physical commitment...not for anybody...so Terry did what every wise and experienced outfitter and dad would do...he sent his son and Brandon up to investigate while he glassed the tree with Jeff...Jeff picked the cat out but wasn't 100% sure...and then the most amazing thing happened...

Seth had been standing around us waiting to see what the plan of attack was...and then he started walking towards the hill...by himself...I was watching him assuming he was just going to the bottom to look up...and then he started up that hill...struggling in the heavy powder but up he went...he turned to look at me and I just kept looking past him to see what he would do...I wondered aloud to Terry and Jeff if Seth would really have the initiative and courage to go up this steep hill, in the country, towards a treed angry cat and two men he did not know well...it is worth mentioning Seth is very cautious and reserved with strangers...he is very technical and deliberate when making decisions...he rarely, if ever acts recklessly...I knew Jarron and Brandon above him were squared away young men...and we were below him and had

him in our sight the whole time...(his mom about fainted when I told her this part so it is important to note Seth was always in our sight)...about 1/3 of the way up the hill he “appeared” to fall on his knees...he got back up went a bit...turned and waved to me...and continued up that hill...15 minutes later my boy took that hill...and his excitement grew as the cat was indeed in the tree...Terry took off up the hill before Jeff and I...and then we ascended the hill...mind you it was take 5 steps...calves burning...take 5 more steps...breathe...each step you sank in the snow and occasionally would slip...good thing for others tracks...made my climb easier...were around 6,000 feet...5 more steps...more burn...more oxygen...you get the idea...



As I neared the top I could hear Seth yelling at the cat in his excitement...I believe he was contemplating going up the tree with his pocketknife to get the cat...then Mr. Terry called him on his bravado and offered his knife and a hand up the tree and Seth decided that might not be a good idea after all...and although he could not see me...he was yelling for me to hurry up and get up there...as I hustled up the hill 5 steps at a time...I arrived 15-20 minutes later...that’s a long time to go 400 yards...and certainly the longest 400 yards of my life...once on top there he was...35 feet up a large pine tree stood our cat...a very nice tom...about 25 pounds...when gauging size it compares nicely to a spring salmon...some are 7 pounds...most in the teens...over 20lbs is a big cat...over 30 lbs is trophy class...and over 40lbs would be world class...our cat was nestled in between several branches...I am amazed at the camo God gave these creatures...initially, not that easy to see...and I will save the gory details but suffice to say two shots through the lungs did not instantly do the job...but finally our standoff ended and he fell into the snow...Seth excitedly went to the cat...

As he was rushing down the hill back to the truck...he learned never to start snowball fights with country boys...as they are just big kids at heart...while he was learning that lesson Terry made lunch and we relaxed...and then Seth came quietly up to me and said



“dad, do you know what I did two times?”...I said “no, son...what did you do two times...?” He said... “I got a little scared climbing that hill by myself...so the first time I kneeled down (remember him “appearing” falling to his knees) and prayed for God to protect me while I climbed the hill...and then I went a little further and got scared again...and so I prayed again to be brave and for Him to protect me...and you know what dad...? He did protect me...”

Suffice to say, I could not speak for a moment because of the lump in my throat...and my vision became very blurry right away...and I may have even detected a little wetness in Terry’s eyes as well...the way Seth shared this was very humble, very matter of fact and with the sincerity and purity of faith not often seen in any grown man...one of those deals you probably need to be there to witness to grasp the enormity of the moment...and this my friends was the purpose of this trip...bobcats, lions and all the rest make not one bit of difference to me...this day my little boy turned the corner...he realized his real protection and reliance is not his dad...but it comes from his true Father in heaven...my little boy is no longer a little boy...this day marked his first step in becoming a Godly young man...

After this very special moment...I was ready to stop and go home...but then my little boy and new young man emerged and said...”c’mon dad...let’s go get another one”...and Lord willing we will have many more adventures like this one...

Also...a very special thanks to Terry, his family and crew for making this weekend an amazing memory...if any of you are ever looking for a top notch guy...who happens to be a pretty good fishing and hunting guide I would highly recommend him...

