

The **RAMPAGE**

Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation

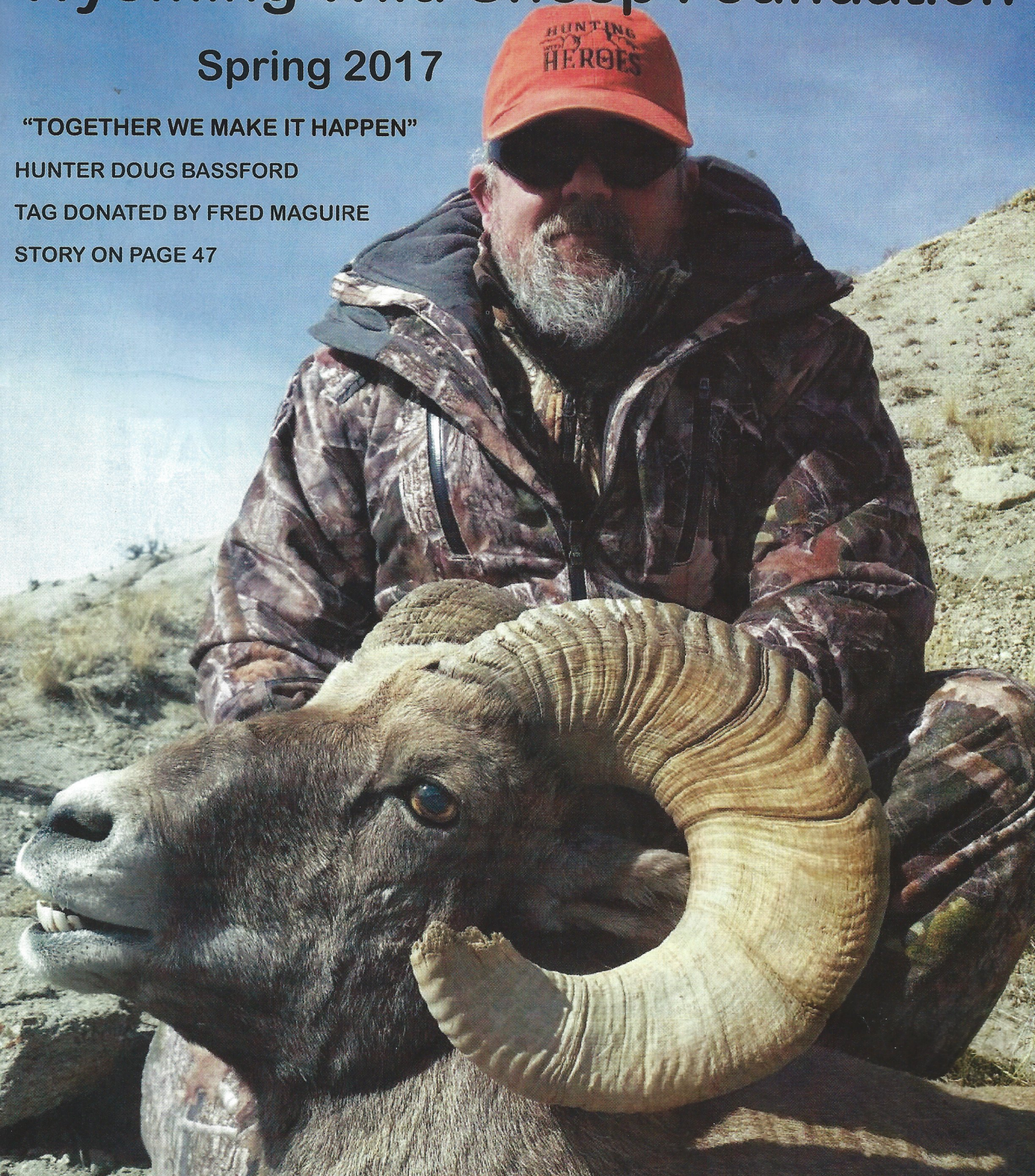
Spring 2017

"TOGETHER WE MAKE IT HAPPEN"

HUNTER DOUG BASSFORD

TAG DONATED BY FRED MAGUIRE

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Doug says, "I won what?"

By Doug Bassford & Steve Kilpatrick

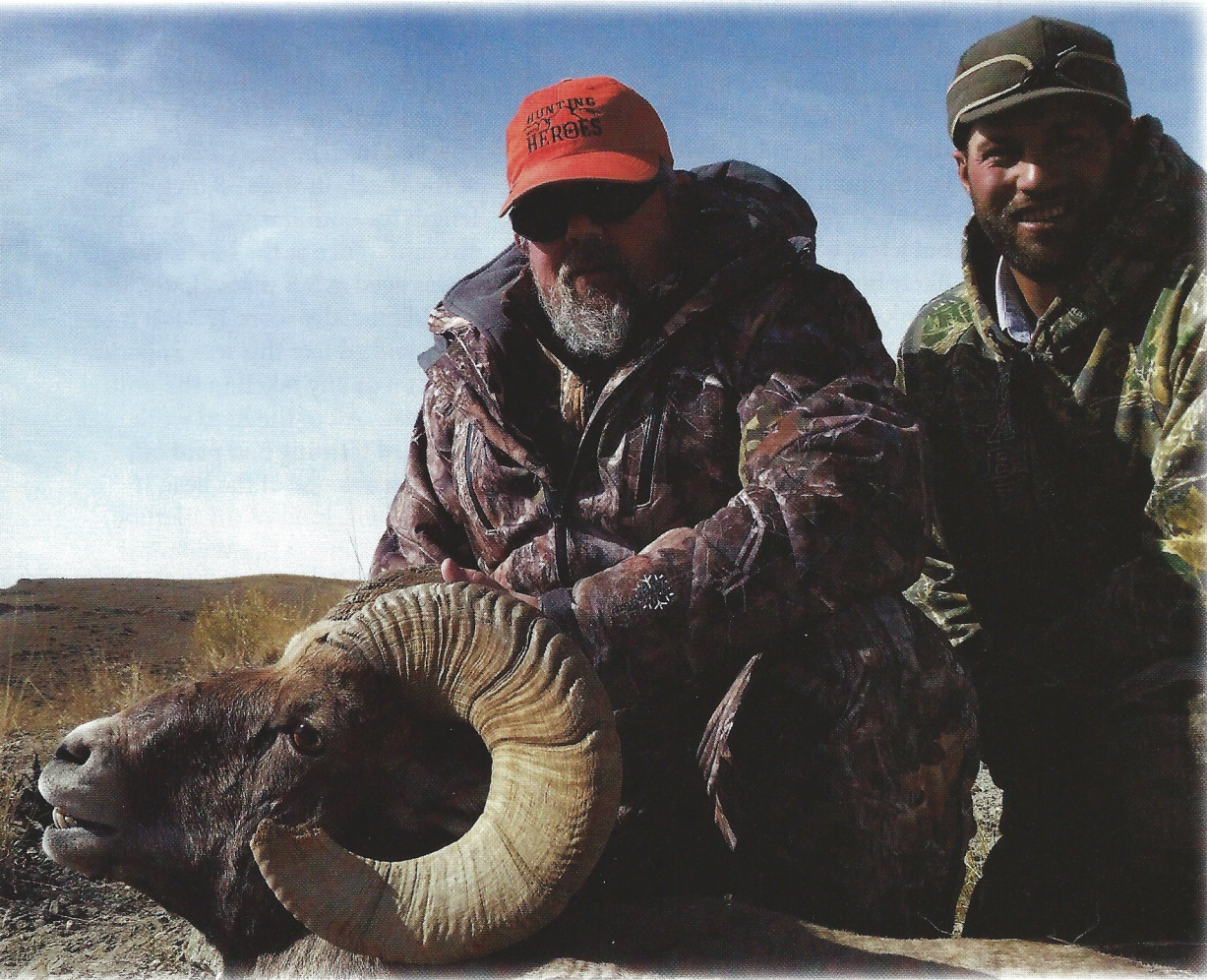
That was the response when Doug Bassford, from Los Banos, California was called by Brian Scott, the MC of our 2016 Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation's banquet. Doug had only hunted one other time in his life. Hunting, the critters and the language were totally foreign to him. So what's the big deal, he won a Wyoming

hunting! People pay hundreds of thousands of dollars and wait seemingly a 100 years to get the opportunity to hunt a bighorn. He was humbled. Doug enlisted with the Marine Corp in 1989, and learned how to shoot BIG GUNS at Camp Pendleton. He became an Assistant Section Chief Artillery Gunner. He could shoot 20

comparison to his buddies. They sustained life threatening injuries and would have to deal with substantial disabilities for the rest of their lives. While Doug took a "hit" there appeared to be nothing physically damaged. So, he just kept fighting and stayed with the Marines until 1997. He came back home and worked as a Construction superintendent

in the engineering field. Doug worked long hours, 6-7 days a week and everything seemed fine. Then it didn't. Doug had suffered traumatic brain damage from the artillery round, and things were slowly getting worse. By May 2013, Doug could no longer work. Doug was hospitalized for six months with PTSD. While there he met Glenn Chrisman, a therapist, who connected him with Dan Currah who heads up Hunting With Heroes along with his

partner, Colton Sasser. Dan made it possible for Doug to hunt pronghorn in Wyoming in 2015. Doug successfully harvested a pronghorn but it wasn't easy, mentally. This was the first time he shot at something that didn't



bighorn sheep tag - kinda like winning a turkey tag, maybe. Well, maybe not. After talking with a couple of his hunting buddies including one in Wyoming, he quickly realized he had won the LOTTERY of

miles, but someone was likely to shoot back. And, shoot back they did. An artillery round went off next to Doug and three of his buddies in Kuwait, Iraq in February of 1991. Doug felt really lucky in



Doug with his hunt team of Cody Brown, Wind River Backcountry Outfitters, Casey & Cory Albright

shoot back and the sight of blood took him back to the battle zone. He cried for 20 minutes after taking the life of that pronghorn. But, he had overcome a mental hurdle. There was relief and doors began to open. He could now actually make plans and set goals - around things like duck hunting. Doug credits Wyoming for helping him his first steps out of a very dark place. On to the sheep tag. First, it takes generous folks like Fred Maguire, from Casper Wyoming, to donate a transferable sheep tag. Fred took a ram in 1988, but kept acquiring his points. Since then he has gone through the changes many of us have. Trophies and horns were no longer the end goal of hunting. Maximizing the adventure and essence of hunting itself is now his goal. Fred was reading the Wyoming Wildlife magazine and an article about Hunting With Heroes "hit him like a brick". He could actually donate his sheep tag to someone that helped secure his freedom and unique Wyoming lifestyle. Dan Currah's name was in the article and he lived in Casper, where Fred lives. The phone book provided the connection to Dan and the tag donation was in the works. The next step is securing adequate funds so as not to financially burden the wounded veteran receiving the sheep tag. That's where the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation stepped up to the plate and approved a

\$10K grant request from Hunting With Heroes. The funds were prioritized for sheep hunt(s). Dan and his crew solicited qualified hunters and they randomly drew a winner for Brian Scott to announce and call at the banquet. It was Doug Bassford. The crowd of almost 400 raised the roof when that call was made. Now it's late October. Cody Brown owner of Wind River Backcountry Outfitters, and his crew Casey Albright, Cory Albright and Fritz Meyer generously provided outfitting and guiding services. As Doug says, "They were simply amazing". Doug had gotten a little anxious and drove out early to stay in Pavilion while Cody completed other hunts. Then he got little more anxious and decided to move closer, to a motel in Dubois where he called Cody to learn when the hunt might occur. Cody invited him to the bar that night where he promptly told him to be ready the next morning, early. Doug needed to get out of his Hawaiian shirt and shorts and go camo. Just like that, game on, Cody style. The next morning Doug got to experience a "little" Dubois wind. First he was treated to watching one of Cody's guides and hunter harvest an elk at a distance. That was topped by watching a mix of pronghorn, wolves and elk trying to figure out who was after who and which way to run. Then Cody rolls down the window of his truck and slaps on a spotting scope while overlooking the Badlands near Dubois. Cody,

"There they are". Two rams in the Badlands, but they were not dumb ones. They were positioned so that one could not sneak on them given the wind direction. Cody, "We will just watch them for a couple of hours and come back tomorrow." Of course Doug doesn't sleep much and he's ready hours before light. Cody and Casey pick him up and rumble back to the Badlands. The rams are spotted again and Doug is told to follow Cody and Casey while they all sneak within range. Doug soon finds out what a little "sneak" on a Wyoming ram entails. He describes it this way, "Cody and Casey were two mountain goats, dragging me along." Once they are within range Cody has Doug "dry fire" at the ram until his nerves settle to a dull roar. Distance and wind direction/speed are accounted for and Doug successfully harvests a majestic ram. Horses and mules are brought in for the retrieval. Doug has to pinch himself; the whole experience has been surreal. Doug left the ram in Dubois for a full body mount by Ethan Liesenfeldt with Western Legacy Taxidermy. He and his wife are returning this spring to pick up the mount, but they are not moving it to California. Instead, Doug will finish 20 more weeks of treatments in California and then THEY ARE MOVING to Dubois. The ram will simply be scooted across the street. Two hunts and a boat load of hospitality and the Bassfords are converting to Wyomingites! We welcome them.