

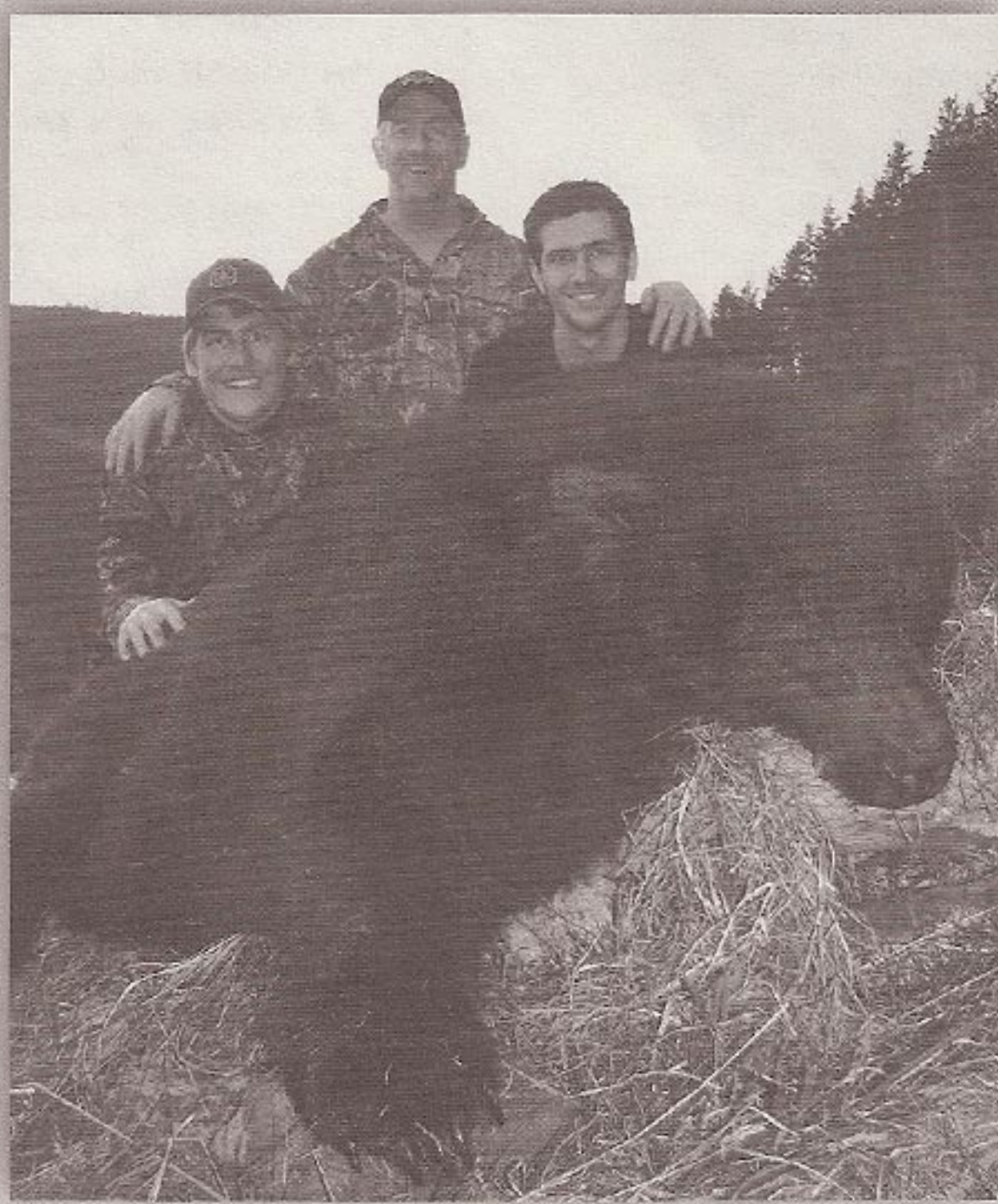
AWESOME BEAR HUNT

Making memories with your best friends – your kids.

Story by Tom Hever
Photo by Sean Lingl

Why do we hunt? Is it for a trophy animal, a new adventure, the grand slam or for the memories? Is it the smell of the campfire and breakfast? Is it the new gear, or chasing animals up and down mountains? Sometimes, even going home with only good memories of the hunt makes it worth the trip. This hunt with my boys, Thomas, 21, and Michael, 19, was a combination of everything that makes hunting great.

We had been talking about hunting bears for three years – around the dinner table, and at the deer camp. At the DSC show in 2009, we met Sean Lingl of Canadian Guide Outfitters, and in 2010, we advanced the



One dad + two sons + three bears = memories for a lifetime!

conversation to Sean's available dates and expectations, and booked the hunt for May 2011. On the way home from that show, my boys talked about two things: "Wow, Dad, we really are going to hunt bear!" and "How are we going to tell Mom?" They came up with a strategy: "Dad, we could invite Mom and Dominique (their sister) along on the hunt. Make a vacation with a stopover in Vancouver, or send Mom and Dominique on their own vacation." Their ending comment on the driveway was "good luck, Dad." Once inside, Thomas said, as he retreated to his room, "Mom, Dad has great news. We booked our bear hunt!"

Once we got Mom to understand she was not going to lose her husband

and two sons to a hungry bear, we turned our attention to planning the trip. Like all guys, it started with new gear. We bought rain gear (of course it did not rain, but we had it), booked airline tickets, rented a car, and sighted-in.

After four hours on planes, two hours waiting on customs to check our guns, and two hours in the car, we arrived at the lodge. Sean Lingl started to explain the hunting plan, but quickly realized we were too tired to listen. Off to bed we went, knowing the 7 a.m. wake-up call was in six short hours.

The next morning, we sat down to breakfast and met our guides. Sean drew the short straw and took me; Thomas went with Oli; and Michael with Bob. Sean showed the map of the hunting areas, and explained that on Vancouver Island, you hunt, spot and stalk in the clear-cut woods and the logging roads. He said, "We will drive the logging roads, glassing for bear and when we see a nice one, we will get a closer look to determine if it is a shooter." The goal was a seven-footer.

So we headed out for the first day, lunch in cooler and expectations high for a great day of hunting. We all saw a lot of bears but no shooters.

On the second day, after several long stalks, Michael got a big boar in his sights. However, this bear had

other ideas and took off. After pounding the logging roads a little more, another bear was spotted and the stalk was on. Michael's guide said, "He is seven-plus, take him if he gives you a shot." Michael put the crosshairs on the bear and took him down – a great bear for Michael, and good experience in stalking big mature bears.

At the same time, 10 miles away, Dad was tracking two mature bears. After a 20-minute stalk, we both realized we could do better, and set off after the other bear on the opposite hill. We stalked this bear for about two miles, when we got a view of his 19-7/8-inch pumpkin head. Sean said, "Tom, we are taking that bear, get ready." And wouldn't you know, the bear headed for the trees right off the road. We waited the ten minutes that seemed like an hour, until the bear poked his left shoulder and head out from the tress, and I fired. Two huge black bears down.

Thomas was happy for us, but he had not seen any big bears. We call Thomas "Last Minute Louie" because he always shoots on the last day. We planned for everyone to spot bears for Thomas on our next hunting day. After another early start, we headed off in different directions. Radios on, waiting to hear "we see a shooter" – I was getting a little nervous because, by 6 p.m. no big bear had been sighted. Then at 6:30,

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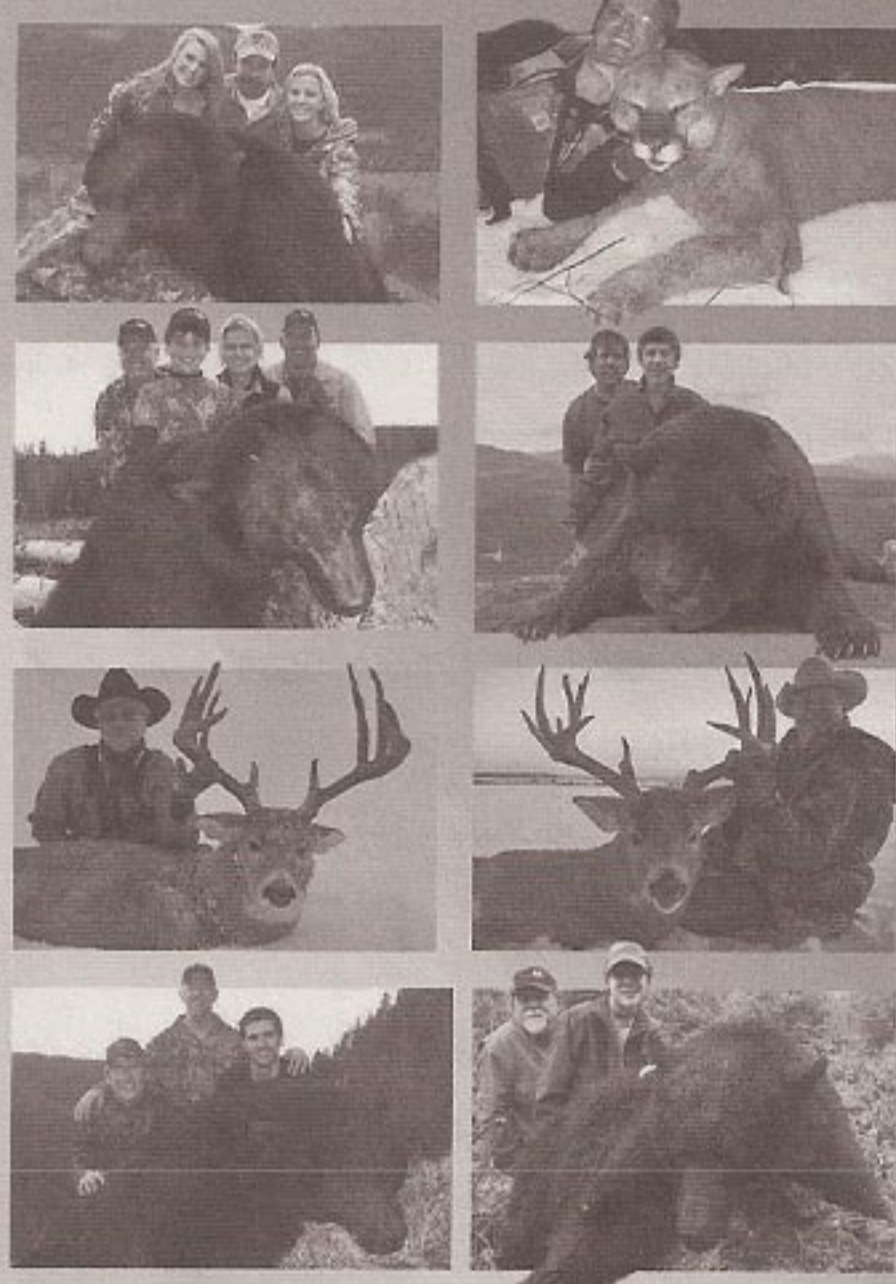
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yards uphill from the bear. The viewing committee yelled, "Shoot him!" The bear seemed to sense something was not right.

All of a sudden, the bear broke up the hill, running at full speed. Still no shot. Suddenly, we saw the giant rolling down the hill, then heard the report seconds later. BOOM! Michael said, "Guys, we just had the best front row seat to an Outdoor Channel bear hunt!"

We drove around and started the 20-minute walk up the mountain to Thomas' bear. Michael ran on ahead. Thomas told us he could not see the bear until he ran up the mountain because he was feeding in a huge ditch. That is why they did not shoot right away. I hugged Thomas and congratulated him on a huge black bear. Thomas and Oli were soaked through with sweat from the hour and half stalk, but Thomas said it all, "What an awesome stalk for an awesome bear!"

On the flight home, I thought about "why do we hunt?" It is the big bear hugs from my sons, saying "Dad, what a great week. We made new friends, saw a new part of the world, and had a successful hunt. We will remember this forever. Thank you." This is the real measure of a successful hunt. If you look at their Facebook pages, the bears are front and center along with their tales of the hunt, lodge and guides. Taking your sons hunting truly makes them your best friends. GF

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