

TWO DAYS



Kelsy Claypool of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, with the super wide mule deer she took in that province in 2007. The greatest spread on this big muzzleloader buck is over 32 inches, with the inside going 30 7/8 inches. The antlers ended up grossing 197 and netting 190 6/8 typical points. Kelsy's dad, Arlee, couldn't believe it when the buck went down in a heap. You could not have found a prouder father that memorable day.

The lady on the loudspeaker called all passengers to now board the flight. I was leaving Montreal on my way home to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, from a pretty long and wet Quebec Labrador caribou hunt.

The muzzleloader mule deer season had started on October 1st, and it was now already the 12th and I hadn't even

been out scouting yet! I'm sure the mule deer gods were not very proud of me at this point.

My phone started vibrating, so I reached down and yonked it out of my pocket. It was Mr. Shockey. I informed him of the successful hunt in Quebec, and then proceeded to tell him my plans for the mule deer season throughout

WITH A PRINCESS

BY CODY ROBBINS

October. He generously gave me a few words of advice, and then signed off to pursue some exotic animal in a far-off land.

Who would my first mule deer hunter be? I had to think of all the lucky people that I knew had been drawn for the coveted tag . . . hmmm . . . my brother maybe? Knowing that he has the type of wife who lets him go hunting for half an hour every four years, and not being able to remember for sure if it was the fourth year or not, sorry brother, too risky! Maybe Chris Adair from Harris . . . now that is a risky one, too! If you were to look up the word “hyperventilate” in the dictionary, you would see a picture of Chris stalking a ratty mule deer. It would probably be fine to take him as long as a nurse accompanied us geared with an oxygen tank in hand, just in case we bumped into a hog. But again, sorry Chris, tooo risky!

Thinking back to all of the local people I had hunted with, I was trying to remember the experiences that had turned out

well. One hunt that kept jumping back into my mind was one that I had guided the year previous . . . Arlee Claypool . . . oh yeah, the 25-day hunt from hell! Arlee is roughly 4'13", but has the ego of a very healthy gorilla. It did not matter what buck I showed him – 200-inch typical, triple drop-tined bucks, and a mammoth non-typical – nothing was big enough for Arlee “Mighty Mouse” Claypool. To be totally honest, looking back on that hunt, I don't think I have ever had that much fun.

I decided to call Arlee and reminisce about all of the intense moments from our memorable hunt. While talking to my old buddy, he informed me that his daughter Kelsy was drawn for mule deer in the same zone we had hunted the year prior.

Kelsy was pretty excited when Cody Robbins phoned her to see if he could guide her to a big mule deer. Cody is well-known across the country for getting up-close-and-personal to gigantic mule deer. Over the years he has been behind the camera for many of Jim Shockey's videos and TV show. Sure looks like Cody did his magic once again.



Yikes! That's my hunter! I made short order of politely hanging up on Mighty Mouse and calling his knockout of a daughter as fast as I could dial the numbers! After two rings, Kelsy answered and I gave her the best sales pitch possible, hoping that she would accept my hunting invitation.

This is what I got in return, "Sure, Code, I would love to come hunting with you, but just so you know, I only have two days to hunt, and I am not shooting a buck unless it is bigger than my dad's. Oh yeah, most importantly, I have never shot a gun before. So, you are going to have to teach me in one of those two days! Capeesh?"

"No problem, Kelsy, consider it done!" In the back of my mind, I was wondering how in the heck I always seem to get into these predicaments.

"Code, I just have a few more questions."

"Sure Kels, shoot." My eyes slowly rolled into the back of my head as I anticipated the upcoming inquiries.

"I was just wondering if we have to get up early, because I am not really a morning person, and are there going to be bugs, cuz I hate bugs! I am not coming if there are bugs!" I did what any used car salesman would do and made the sale.

The next day, Arlee and Kelsy came out for a lesson in shooting the muzzleloader. I also brought my .243 for Kelsy to fire a couple of times for her to get more comfortable with her shooting. It turned out she shot less than a one-inch group at 100 yards. This girl had the makings of a sniper! I am certain that she got these genetics from her mother.

Early the next morning, as the sun was making its way up into the blue sky, we were heavy in search of a monster mulie for Kelsy. By noon, we had made a couple of stalks on some pretty nice bucks, but Kelsy just was not quite happy with any of them. Flashbacks of her dad's hunt were starting to give me a nervous twitch.

The first day came to an end with no success, well, at least no big buck in the back of the truck. I informed Kelsy that she needed to be back at my house ready to rock at 6:15 a.m. In return, I got an evil scowl. With a little persuading, I convinced her that it had to be done.

The next morning at 7:15, she arrived with her game face on. Only an hour late, but she was there and that was the main thing.

We headed back into the same country where we had been the day before. Right at daybreak, we spotted a jumbo that had to be at least 30 inches wide inside. We watched him bed down, and then planned a stalk. We had set out after the buck at roughly 9:00 a.m. and it was now 3:00 p.m. Kelsy, Arlee, and I were lying

flat on our stomachs on the top of a hill, patiently waiting for the big old buck to stand up and give us a shot. We had already put about three unsuccessful stalks on him at this point, and he had busted us every time. We never lost track of him, and he kept giving us more opportunities. Within 140 yards, the buck was breathtaking! With a Boone and Crockett typical frame and over 30 inches wide inside, he was every hunter's dream! To this point, Kelsy had never taken a big game animal before. This was her maiden voyage; talk about a lucky girl!

After waiting for over two hours for the buck to stand, Kelsy quietly whispered, "Cody, I have to pee!"

I looked at her in disbelief, "Hold it, Princess!"

Another hour passed, and again I heard Kelsy say, "Cody, I really have to pee!"

I looked her in the eyes and explained, "Kelsy, you have a monster, jumbo, ginormous buck about to stand up at any second. Are you sure you can't hold it?"

With no hesitation at all, she answered, "NOPE!" So off the hill we crawled, down into a patch of buckbrush to answer the call of nature.

When we returned to the crest of the hill, much to my relief the buck was still sound asleep. About 25 minutes passed before the big ol' brute threw his head forward and rocked to his feet. "Kels, he is up, get ready!"

She raised the gun to her shoulder and waited for my command. I was filming the hunt for *Jim Shockey's Hunting Adventures*, so as soon as I had the footage that I needed, I gave her the nod. KABOOM!

The smoke slowly drifted off to our left. The buck was still standing there untouched. Our princess had just missed! Kelsy laid the gun in the grass and her face dropped to the ground. I am not sure who was more disappointed. We all stared in disbelief. The big buck just stood there in a puzzled state as to what had just happened.

I grabbed the gun and started to reload it. It took me about two minutes to accomplish the chore while lying on my stomach. I handed her the gun back and started filming again. Okay, Kelsy, take your time and slowly squeeze . . . KABOOM! It all happened in slow motion as the buck's legs flexed to his stomach and he dropped like a rock, stone dead! HUG TIME! We were heroes! To see Kelsy's excitement at shooting her very first buck with her dad present is a feeling that I live for. It would have been pretty tough to find a father who could have been more proud of his daughter that day. 🍀