

# In Search of Galileo

As the 2012 hunting season drew to an end I sat back and thought it couldn't have gone any better. My fourteen-year-old son, Nick, had drawn four Arizona big game tags and filled three with one remaining. All the hunts were memorable but the last one was the best because he had drawn the highly-coveted desert bighorn ram tag. To make it even more challenging this hunt was going to take place in one of the toughest and most remote places in the west, the Arizona Strip.

In preparation for this sheep hunt Nick had taken a javelina at 200 yards, a Coues buck at 400 yards, and thanks to his Godfather, Dr. Tim Gomez, a very nice 6x6 bull elk at 652 yards. Needless to say, I was confident in his shooting abilities but the real challenge was going to be finding a ram to shoot in this desolate region. The area had a very small sheep population and we were told that we would be lucky to see any sheep, let alone a decent ram. I knew this unit had shut out two hunters in the previous two years but I simply couldn't fathom how difficult this hunt was going to be.

Preparation for this dream hunt began shortly after getting over the shock that my son had drawn a tag of lifetime with only two bonus points. I needed to find a very experienced guide who knew the area intimately. I contacted everyone I could think of and spoke to several outfitters and guides before my research led me to one name, Arlis Miller. I was told he was one of the best sheep guides in northern Arizona and after speaking with Arlis I knew he was the right man for the job. His calm demeanor coupled with his knowledge of the area would be a perfect fit for my young son.

The hunting season for this tag ran from December 1-31, but my son couldn't start his hunt until he finished school on December 19th. I made arrangements to meet Arlis the weekend before the hunt to set up camp, scout, and get a lay of the land. My best friend, Jay Jones, and my wife's brother-in-law, Larry Osborne, volunteered to help me. We met Arlis and his friend George Siebrecht on a snowy Saturday morning and drove out into the desert.

After a couple of hours of driving we stopped and walked out to the edge of Kanab Creek Wilderness, which is a major canyon that feeds right into the Grand Canyon. We were awestruck by the view. There is nothing that can prepare you for such a sight. Its sheer size and grandeur is mind boggling. After taking some pictures we settled down and began glassing. A short time later Arlis announced that he had spotted some sheep. We tried in vain to locate the animals with our optics but were unsuccessful. We finally gave up and decided looked through Arlis's 30-70x95 Swarovski spotting scope. As I strained to see the sheep from over three miles away, all I could see were five specks that looked like ants. Arlis said they were all ewes.

Our discussion on the drive back to camp was very somber. Each of us had over 35 years of hunting experience, but to be frank we were all intimidated by what we had just experienced. First, we had the fear that we would not be able to find a ram and then there was the fear of what to do if we did find one. The sheep in the area lived on talus slopes which are thin strips of land on the side of the canyons. Above these talus slopes are rock bluffs that are 50-100 feet tall and below them are sheer cliffs that drop 150-300 feet to the bottom of the canyon.



by Greg Lucero



The following day we bounced from one point to another trying to find sheep. We had been giving Larry a hard time over his archaic, skinny spotting scope. It looked like the ancient, extendable telescope that was used by the early astronomer "Galileo". Hence Larry was dubbed with a new nickname "Galileo". We were all laughing pretty hard until Larry said, "I got a sheep." We were dumbfounded and thought he was probably looking at a rock or tree. He was glassing a canyon two miles away.

Well, Larry definitely got the last laugh! George immediately found the sheep in his spotting scope and said it was a ram. Then he clarified, "It's a big ram!" I decided to give Larry credit for this ram and named it "Galileo". Larry didn't like the name much and tried in vain to convince us to change it to the "Osborne Ram" but we all crushed his suggestion. We watched the ram until nightfall and tried to guess its score. Everyone was guessing around 165, plus or minus a couple of inches. Regardless of the score it was a tremendous ram for this unit.

We returned on Monday morning and found "Galileo" along with two ewes and a smaller ram. Both Jay and Larry had to leave and I needed to drive back home to pick up my son so we left Arlis and George to keep track of the ram. I called Arlis on Tuesday to let him know we would be returning late Wednesday night. He said he had found "Galileo" again but he was on the move and was concerned that we might not be able to find him again on Thursday.

We made it back into camp late Wednesday night and the temperature was a very chilly 2°F. When we awoke Thursday morning we were greeted by several guides that Arlis had called in to help. The plan was for us to follow Arlis and another guide, Russ Jacoby, to the area where he had last seen "Galileo". We would then wait for spotters from across the canyon to find him and radio us. I was astonished to hear there would be five guys across the canyon glassing for "Galileo".

We arrived at our predetermined destination just as the sun began to rise but not the temperature. It was only 6°F and there was about two inches of snow on the ground.



Arlis walked over to our truck and said we would wait for the spotters to call us. He walked back to his truck and then came right back to our truck again. I thought he had forgotten something and was surprised when he told us the spotters had already found "Galileo". We quickly assembled our gear and loaded the rifle. My friend Jay had graciously lent us his rifle and his rangefinder. The rifle is a 7MM Remington 700 ADL topped with a Huskemaw 5x20 scope that is calibrated to go out to 1,000 yards. The rangefinder is a G7 BR2 that not only gives you the line of sight distance but also adjusts for altitude, temperature, and most importantly steep angles that would impact long range shots.

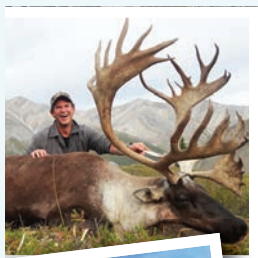
We followed Arlis and Russ over to the edge of the canyon and within seconds Arlis had the sheep spotted. There were four ewes, a lamb, a small ram, and "Galileo". I ranged the small ram at 350 yards but was having a hard time ranging "Galileo". He was behind a bush in a drainage about 100 yards below the small ram. Not wanting to waste time I decided to get the rifle set up for my son's shot. We placed a backpack on a large rock in front of us and laid the rifle on it for a steady rest. Our movement got the attention of the ewes and they nervously began to trot up the canyon away from us. "Galileo" didn't want to lose his ewes so he chased after them.

They made it to the back of the canyon and stopped to look back at us. I ranged "Galileo" at 517 yards and adjusted the turret on the scope for my son. He whispered that he had "Galileo" in the crosshairs and was ready to shoot. I told him to concentrate on a spot behind his shoulder and gently squeeze the trigger. Just then the rifle went off and Arlis said "Galileo" was hit! We watched as he staggered around and then he bedded down. He laid his head down on the ground and we thought it was over, but a few minutes later his head snapped straight up. He was alert and looking around. We didn't want to risk losing him so we decided to take another shot. My son steadied for a clear shot and squeezed the trigger. He hit "Galileo" again and this time he was down for the count.



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**Greg will receive a pack from Badlands for his story. See page 40 for more information.**



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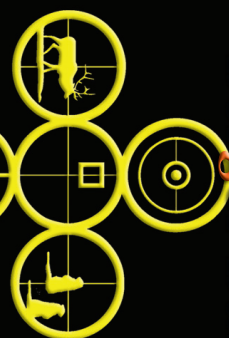
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... says Jason Seitz of Georgetown, IN. He shot this deer while hunting with some friends in CO. He took the shot at 563 yards. "My deer only traveled 40 yards after the shot. He was 32.5 wide and we estimated him to score in the low 180's. I could not be happier with the hunt."

Jason's rifle is a Remington 700, chambered in .260 Rem, with a H.S. Precision stock. His ammo was loaded with Remington brass, CCI primers, H4831 powder and Berger 6.5mm 140gr Match Grade VLD Hunting bullets.



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Nick's elk fell off a cliff after it was shot and shattered the antlers. Shown are Nick and his father Greg Lucero.

The time and effort put forth by everyone to make this hunt a success was nothing short of amazing. The celebration that takes place after a sheep hunt is like winning the World Series. Ironically, you just about have to put together a baseball team to make it all come together. I'm extremely proud of my son but also am very thankful for all the help provided by Jay, Larry, Arlis, George, Russ, Dean Dunaway, Pete Winn and his son Greg. Arizona Game and Fish estimated "Galileo" was eight years old with a 163 gross and 161 7/8 net score.

Now I have to explain to my son that harvesting four awesome trophies capped off with a desert bighorn ram- a magnificent animal that most hunters will never get the opportunity to hunt- doesn't happen every year, decade, or century! Someday I hope he'll understand and appreciate what hunting and the outdoors is all about- the special opportunity to spend time with a son or daughter, your family and your friends. I realize how incredibly unique this year was and it makes the memories that much more special.

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