

Three massive bull elk keep watch over Mills Building Supply



A corkboard covered in images of old hunts sits behind Kenny Mills' desk at Mills Building Supply. Mills has been hunting since he was 12 and began bowhunting in 1982.



Kenny Mills, owner of Mills Building Supply, talks on the phone surrounded by trophies and memories of past hunts.



TROPHIES A REMINDER OF THE GOOD OLD DAYS AT MILLS BUILDING SUPPLY

STORY & PHOTOS BY RYLAN BOGGS

Kenny Mills fondly remembers the good old days as he stares around his storefront full of elk, deer and mountain lion mounts. The owner of Mills Building Supply Co. for 32 years, Mills still has time to slip out the back and enjoy the crisp fall weather with a bow in his hand.

His store has become a sort of shrine for those in area who don't have enough room at home for their mounts or those who have left them behind. Behind Mills' desk is a wall covered with grainy film images of past hunts. Grizzly bears, deer, elk and all sorts of other game decorate the wall. The oldest of the mounts is a deer shot in 1933 by Cliff Lemons.

Mills points fondly to an image he took in his backyard of a buck eating out of a barrel with a yard stick resting on the brim. He explains the buck had become tame enough that he could get within a few yards to take a picture.

"People ask me, 'How wide is he?'"

"Well, he's 34 and a quarter."

"Well, how you know that?"

"Cause he's eating out of that bucket," Mills laughed. "Yup, those were the good old days."

The photo wall is flanked by two massive elk mounts. One, a 363-point bull, is the biggest in the store. The other, Kenny shot with his bow in the '80s.

Still a hunter, Mills hunts when he can get away from his building supply store. He went on his first hunt at age 12 and has loved it ever since.

Mills has been bowhunting since 1982. Raised on hunting, he says enjoys the challenge and the escape it provides.

"We put in a lot of hours here so it's just a good getaway," he said.

The closest kill Mills has made was from 15 yards on a bull elk in rut. That elk is now hanging in his shop. He claims he's never had a bad time hunting — maybe lost in the fog a few times, but never a bad time.

"I usually just hunt locally, just grab the bow and a couple Snickers and head out," Mills said.

Above the windows in the front of the store are two sets of elk antlers locked together with barbed wire. The antlers were found in 1969 by Bud Streeter, a logging superintendent for the San Juan Lumber Company, according to Blue Mountain Eagle records.

The two six-point bulls fought to the death and became entangled in a fence south of Canyon Creek in the Sloan Gulch area. The animals had reportedly pulled up roughly 400 feet of fence during the battle. Streeter found them an estimated week after death, removed the antlers and buried the carcasses. Despite this, the manager of the store at the time had to "call upon a variety of air-freshening devices to purify matters."

All around Mills' store are reminders of the past, photos of old friends and long-gone hunts. Mills admits to not knowing the story of every mount on the wall or knowing every person in the photo collection.

Still, he said, they're an embodiment of "the good old days."

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A bighorn sheep mount at Mills Building Supply.