

# Tag

Continued from Page 18

scouting the area where they planned to hunt because getting close to a bighorn sheep is very difficult.

“My dad helped me a lot, and my aunts and uncles helped with scouting, seeing where the animals were at,” Wheeler said. “Most of my preparation was shooting and trying to stay in shape for the hike.”

After months of preparing, September arrived and the hunt was on.

## The hunt of a lifetime

The day Wheeler bagged the bighorn sheep she was surrounded by family who were all there to support her in her hunt. Her aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, parents, brother and husband were all at Aldrich Mountain the day of the hunt.

“Just having all that family surrounding me that day just really made a cool moment,” Wheeler said.

She was also seven weeks pregnant with Owen Wheeler, whom she had not told all of her family about yet.

On opening day, Wheeler went out and saw some bighorn sheep but did not have a good shot.

On the second day, she got the prize. She was with her husband and father during the hunt.

“It was nice having my family there, but I was nervous,” Wheeler said. “You get pretty anxious for a shot like that, and I’ve always had buck fever so I get super excited when I’m out there.”

The trio hiked most of the morning and ended up walking on a hillside when, a little over 100 yards away, they spotted a ram sitting in the shade, thinking he was hidden.

They were above the sheep on a hillside with sliding rocks.

“Walking in that rock is like walking in sand,” she said. “You take a step and you slide down a foot it feels like.”

After spotting the ram, the trio sat down. Her dad was on her left and her husband was on her right and they prepared a shooting stand to have a nice rest with her pink camo 7mm-08 rifle.

“Fortunately I had my husband there to remind me to breath because I was shaking and excited and my dad was too,” Wheeler said. “We get such buck fever, but my husband keeps a cooler head and he got me to calm down.”

Wheeler took the shot and managed to hit the ram right behind its right shoulder, killing it in one shot.

After realizing her once-in-a-lifetime success, she cried out in joy for the achievement, feeling grateful for the animal and for having her husband and father with her.

**“GROWING UP IN GRANT COUNTY, BORN AND RAISED, WE LIVE IN SOME OF THE BEST AREA THIS NATION CAN OFFER, AND WE HAVE SO MANY COOL ANIMALS AND SO MUCH TO ENJOY OUT THERE. PEOPLE SHOULD ENJOY IT WITH LOVED ONES AND TAKE CARE OF IT SO WE CAN KEEP IT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS LIKE MY SON. I WANT HIM OUT THERE WITH ME, MY DAD AND MY HUSBAND KILLING HIS FIRST DEER.”** —Laci Wheeler



Contributed photo  
**Laci Wheeler and her husband, Adrian, were together when Laci shot a bighorn sheep last year.**

“Getting to have my dad, who is my hunting partner for life, and then my husband was just a really surreal, proud and exciting moment,” Wheeler said.

## Packing out with family

The trio skinned and quartered the ram to

disperse the weight between each person.

Wheeler said the horns scored 173 2/8, according to an official wildlife biology guide, and they aged the ram out to six and a half years.

Fortunately, the trio received help lifting the animal from Wheeler’s aunt and her



Contributed photo/Tanni Wenger Photography  
**Laci Wheeler was pregnant with Owen Wheeler when she went hunting for bighorn sheep last year.**



Contributed photo  
**Laci Wheeler and her father pose with the ram she shot last year on Aldrich Mountain.**

70-year-old grandfather.

Wheeler’s uncle is working on the taxidermy for the bighorn sheep, and the meat was taken to Russell’s Custom Meats & Deli, mostly for spicy pepperoni.

Wheeler said she was appreciative of the experience and the ability to share it with many loved ones.

“Growing up in Grant County, born and raised, we live in some of the best area this nation can offer, and we have so many cool animals and so much to enjoy out there,” Wheeler said. “People should enjoy it with loved ones and take care of it so we can keep it for future generations like my son. I want him out there with me, my dad and my husband killing his first deer.”