

**“As I ran my hand through the bear’s hide, I gave thanks for the privilege of hunting such a magnificent animal. Only a hunter can truly understand the mixed emotions one feels during a moment such as this.”**

## Overtime Bear

Five days of dealing with intermittent rain, sleet, snow, mud and uncooperative black bears wasn't enough to keep the author from finding success in Alberta last spring.

**Text and photos by NAHC Member G. Latham Myers II**

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN DARKNESS arrives on the final day of a 6-day black bear hunt, and you still haven't pulled the trigger? Well, if you're like me, you ask the outfitter if it's possible to extend your hunt! That's exactly what I did during the spring of 2006, and thankfully my old friend André van Hilton of Willow Creek Outfitters in Nanton, Alberta, had room in his tent camp for me to stay and keep hunting. Although I'd seen several bears during my spot-and-stalk hunt with André, bad weather and simple bad luck had kept me from being successful.

As André's new group of hunters arrived in camp, he assured them that I was the exception to the rule, and that there were plenty of bears. After all, last year after only 3 days of hunting, all five of his hunters in camp had tagged out, and three of those five bears had squared 7 feet. The bears were definitely here. We just needed to find one that was coming toward us, instead of going away from us.

I guess you could say I was now working overtime for my bear, but the pleasure of meeting and talking with my new guide, Kelly Weibe, made our hunt-

ing time together no chore at all. We continued to hunt in much the same way André and I had, but on our third day out, my luck finally changed. Kelly spotted a nice bear, and from the way it swaggered into the aspen thicket, we knew it was a good-sized boar.

The bear was going away from us, but this time we had plenty of daylight left so the stalk was on! We made a big loop around the aspen thicket, keeping the wind in our favor, but we failed to locate the bear. Kelly thought the boar would walk into the wind, so we headed into the wind as well. After we'd walked about a mile, I was beginning to

think we'd lost the bear when Kelly turned to me and said, "There he goes!" And sure enough, the bear was still ahead of us and walking into the wind.

After a wild ¾-mile sprint to try to catch up with the bear, we approached a ridge and looked over. There was no bear. Just then, we saw some mule deer burst out of a creek-bottom, and a couple hundred yards behind them was our bear. The boar finally stopped to eat some grass and skunk cabbage and this gave us an opportunity to close the distance to 220 yards. We were in a popple coppice, but I couldn't get a clear shot so we snuck down the hill to get a little



**The author's Alberta bear camp consisted of comfortable wall tents—one for cooking, one for dining and two for sleeping—complete with wood stoves.**

The weather changed dramatically during the author's spring 2006 black bear hunt. At one point, he was spot-and-stalk hunting in 5 inches of fresh snow. Only a couple days later, the temperature rose to nearly 70 degrees.

closer. I sat down with my shooting sticks at the ready, but we had to move again because the brush between me and the bear was too thick. Just as I repositioned myself and found a little lane to shoot through, the bear winded us. He quickly stood up and put his nose in the air, and that's when I squeezed off a shot from my .270 WSM. After the shot, Kelly and I quickly ran downhill to where the bear had been standing. We found him piled up only 30 yards from the spot where he'd been standing.

As I ran my hand through the bear's hide, I gave thanks for the privilege of hunting such a magnificent animal. Only a hunter can truly understand the mixed emotions one feels during a moment such as this. The mature boar



squared 6 feet, 1½ inches and had a thick black coat with no rub marks. He has a scar on his face from a previous encounter and will definitely add character and beauty to my trophy room.

This was by no means an easy hunt.

It was fair chase at its fairest, and I owe my success to the hard work and persistence of Willow Creek Outfitters. Their willingness to go the extra mile provided me with my overtime bear and enough cherished memories to last a lifetime. ■



For more information on hunting with Willow Creek Outfitters, contact: Willow Creek Outfitters, Attn. Hans and André van Hilton, Box 913, Nanton, Alberta, Canada T0L 1R0; (403) 646-3228. For a link to their Web site, visit [www.huntingclub.com](http://www.huntingclub.com) and click "Featured Links."