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Subject: Brown Bear Hunt with Bearup Adventures LLC

When I was a kid, every Saturday afternoon I'd watch ABC's American Sportsman. Fred Bear's exploits with his bow and arrow must have struck a chord with me because 40 plus years later I'm up in Alaska with Neil Webster of Bearup Adventures chasing a brown bear with my bow. This was a long held and high priority item on my bucket list.

Hunting brown bears with a bow is not an activity which should not be taken lightly. You'd expect anyone to say that, but it wasn't until I saw 9" wide bear tracks with deep claw indentations along the shoreline that I got the full appreciation for how serious this activity is. Anyone who has hunted with Neil knows that he is a deliberate man. And that's the kind of guy (guide) I want backing me up when a piece of string (bow string) is all that is separating me from a trophy whose only fear is a larger bear.

The weather was typical southern Alaska coast- rain on and off everyday. But our spirits were high as we had been seeing bears every day, including one fat boar whose bulk tempted me to pick up my rifle when it seemed I wouldn't get within bow range. Watching him plunge head first into a deep pool and come out with a silver salmon in his jaws caused my adrenaline and optimism to rise sharply. And nearly everyday, a fresh set of tracks made by a 9 1/2 footer would appear in the sand along the shoreline near where we were hunting. No doubt that he was the king of the forest, and the nervous demeanor of every other bear we saw, proved it.

We hunted at the mouth of a freshwater creek which emptied into Icy Bay. Rising tides allowed the silvers and pinks to reach the stream. The bears came out of the woods following the creek downstream in search of unsuspecting fish. One small boar presented a 20 yard shot, but I passed as he didn't appear to be mature. Neil had his 375 fixed on the bear, and I picked up my rifle as well as we waited (and hoped) he'd walk off back into the woods. Neil described it as "up close and personal"; I described it as "too close". It was day six when Neil and I were sure we had figured out the bears' patterns and the right place for us to ambush one. But by the end of day 8, we still hadn't taken a bear, although things were about to change, and quickly. As we were collecting our gear and preparing to walk out, Neil spotted a bear about 75 yards away scavenging on the shoreline. He was walking away from us, and I thought he'd be out of sight shortly. I looked at him through my rifle scope and made a quick decision that this hunt which began as a bow hunt, was going to end as a bow hunt- with or without a bear. I put down the gun. As I did, the bear turned and it a matter of seconds was a mere 30 yards away from us. I had drawn my bow as he was approaching, and was waiting for him at full draw as turned broadside on the far side of the creek. I don't know what Neil was thinking when I didn't shoot- he couldn't know that I didn't have enough light through my peep sight to positively place an arrow. For the second time in less than a minute, I was ready to let this bear

pass. And then it got real interesting. He jumped into the creek and started walking directly at us. Neil sat tight, aiming a 300 grain solid from his 375 at the bear, as we both wondered what was going to happen next. When the bear hit the near side of the creek, he turned broadside for me again, this time at twenty yards. I had enough light at this closer distance and put my pin just behind his ribs, as he was now angled away from me. I touched my release and the arrow made a soft thud. The bear whirled, roared, and flashed his teeth as he tried to bite the thing that bit him. I saw his canines clearly, but had not seen the flight of the arrow, nor its fletching as it had buried itself completely into the bear. But the sound of the arrow convinced me I had made a good shot. As I had read many years ago, that bears, when hit with an arrow, will generally run off in the direction they were pointed when hit. Thank goodness that this bear must have read the same Outdoor Life article. Neil tried to anchor him by breaking his hip with the 375, but the dark bear had moved against the dark background of the forest, and the fading light made Neil's reticle invisible. The bear ran off at the shot, but a minute afterwards, we heard him crash in the woods less than a hundred yards away. I joked with Neil that we should come back with the ATV's and shine the headlights into the woods and go after him. Neil gave me one of his patented grins, as we both knew we'd have to wait until morning. After a fitful night of sleep, we had some breakfast and took up the job at hand.

Going into the dark dense woods after a potentially wounded bear is a heart racing experience. Especially knowing how many other bears and wolves were in the area looking for a meal. We found my arrow covered in blood, right where the bear had entered the woods. We crept 40 or so yards through the alders and found him piled up, right where we heard him crash the brush the evening before. Fortunately, the other bears and wolves did not tear into him at night. After photo's, we skinned him out and headed out of the woods- just as the wolves, smelling blood, started howling. He was a beautiful dark bear with silver tips. Neal's care during skinning and salting were first rate, ensuring that the hide will become a stunning rug.

This was a lifetime experience for me. A number of people supported in this quest including my wife, parents, and Neil. To them I will be forever grateful, and also of course, to Fred Bear.