

SOUTH JORDAN, Utah

## After day-long chase, disabled hunter bags big cat

A MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT 6 years ago left Clay Egan paralyzed and permanently confined to a wheelchair, but the South Jordan, Utah, man wasn't ready to give up hunting.

"Hunting was the biggest part of my life, next to my family," says the quadriplegic. "I was determined that I was still going to hunt, no matter what it took. I'm still able to do what I love most. With numerous kills of several types of species under my belt, this last December proved to be my best hunt to date."

After 8 years of applying for a Utah cougar tag, he finally drew in the Manti-

Nebo area, and guide Steven Carter of Salem, Utah, agreed to take him out.

"On Dec. 22, Steve called to

say he had some tracks located up by Fairview and asked if I could meet him the next day," says Egan. "I was so excited I couldn't sleep. I met Steve and he loaded me on one of his snow machines and set the dogs on the tracks. Finally I was hunting lions."

By noon, after a long ride, the dogs treed the cat. But Egan's hunt was just beginning. The lion was up a narrow

canyon where the snow machine couldn't go.

"I tried so hard to get up to it, but the lion jumped and got away before I could get there," he says. "I thought I had blown my only chance. But about 5 minutes later I could hear the dogs coming back down the canyon. About 200 yards out, there was the lion, walking right in front of me. It was magnificent. Soon it disappeared over the mountainside with the dogs hot on its trail."

By about 2 the dogs had the cat treed again, but it again jumped the tree and ran.

"By now my arms were like Jell-O," says Egan. "I could hardly hold on. The lion was getting tired too, because he soon treed again. He would tree long enough to catch his wind and then jump again. He did this about 6 times throughout the day."

By about 5 p.m., with the dogs, Egan and Carter all getting tired and frustrated, the dogs started howling again. The cat was treed.

"Steve started to hike up with one of his friends, Kurt, who came along to drive me on the snow machine. A few minutes later Steve came back and said it was treed. Kurt stayed with the dogs, but Steve wasn't sure he could get me to the tree, but it was our last chance because it was almost dark. So up the mountain on the snow machine we went. We went over sage-

**SOUTH JORDAN, Utah, hunter Clay Egan shot this tom mountain lion out of Fairview in December after a rigorous sled ride and a guide who carried the quadriplegic the final 100 yards. (Remington Photo Contest entry by Clay Egan)**



**CLAY EGAN** got some help bagging this 7-foot cat from guide Steve Carter, who carried the wheelchair-bound hunter the final 100 yards to the treed cat. (Remington Photo Contest entry by Clay Egan)

brush, over trees, through bushes, over boulders and up the steepest hill I've ever been up. He stood that snow machine almost vertical a time or two and threw me off more times than I care to tell. After picking me back off the ground for the last time, we got up the mountain as far as we could."

But they still had over 100 yards to go to reach the tree.

"We were dead in our tracks," says Egan. "But Steve wasn't giving up. He got Kurt and two other guys and they carried me the rest of the way up the mountain. We finally got to the tree, and there was the cat, sitting on a limb. It was my lion. It was hissing and growling, the dogs were going crazy. Then they sat me on the ground right in the snow below this enormous cat. I was shaking, I was so excited. I was looking face-to-face with this lion, only about 20 feet off the ground. Finally, here's my chance."

Egan pulled out his Ruger New Model Single Six .22 Magnum loaded with CCI Maxi Mags and shot the cat, a tom that measured just under 7 feet.

"I owe it all to Steve Carter, Kurt and Steve's two blue-tick hounds, Hooters and Blue. They all worked their butts off for me and made a hunt of a lifetime come true."

Egan said he spent the next day in the hospital with a kidney infection, but "it was all worth it."

He's having a full-body mount of the cat fashioned by West Taxidermy.

