

## Triple-Amputee Veteran Takes Monster Elk



Jim Sursley & wife Jeannie pose with a beautiful trophy elk!

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HASTINGS, Minn. - Minnesota SCI -- If life had been different for Mr. Jim Sursley, he would today stand 6' 3" tall and weigh about 240 pounds. Instead, Jim is just 4' 8" and weighs only 165—an anti-tank mine changed all that.

Whenever American men and women enter the military service, sacrifice is implied. For Jim, his cost was very great in deed; he gave his left arm and both legs in service to our country.

But the Minnesota SCI and the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association want to say “Thank You” to Jim Sursley, born and raised in Rochester, MN, as well as all American veterans who have served and sacrificed. A big sacrifice deserves a big thank you, and with the help of Tony's Trophy Elk Hunts and The Langenfeld Foundation, Jim embarked on a trophy hunting trip, in pursuit of a big bull elk, December 5-7, in Baudette, MN.

The hunt was a fabulous success, with Jim taking a 1,000 pound monster bull on the second day of hunting. The elk carried a spectacular 7x7 rack of antlers, that scored 360 inches. What's more is that Jim took the beast with a crossbow, and a 40-yard shot.

It was well below zero degrees in northern Minnesota that day, and Jim had to do everything he could just to keep his one remaining hand from freezing. His wife Jeannie accompanied him on the hunt and celebrated the success of the magnificent trophy—Jim's very first elk. Jim said, “I have watched hundreds of TV shows of elk hunting, but when you actually see one for with your own eyes...right up close...they are so, so big that it almost stuns you for a while. You can't believe that what you are seeing is real. It was the thrill of lifetime. Thank you to all who made this possible.”

The Minnesota SCI and Minnesota Elk Breeders Association sponsored this hunt because they wanted to honor an American veteran. “In honoring Jim, we honor all veterans who have stepped forward to serve our country,” said Paul Scott Langenfeld, Humanitarian Coordinator for Minnesota SCI. “They have made tremendous sacrifices, and we want to give something back; a symbol that says 'America appreciates what you've done for us.' Our lives are safe and secure because of your service. Thank you for your sacrifice, we have not forgotten.”

The trophy-class bull elk has been generously donated by a couple from North Dakota, through the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association, and then transported to Baudette by Mark Hendrickson, also of the MEBA. Tony Beckel of Tony's Trophy Elk Hunts then donated his guiding and outfitting services to make this a real elk hunting experience for Jim. (These two donations together carried a value of about \$5,000.) Lodging, in the use of a cabin accessible to people with disabilities, was donated by Sportsman's Lodge.

Jim Sursley was wounded in combat during the Vietnam War, while on a mission in 1969. After returning to Minnesota, he has been helping other disabled veterans through the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and taken on leadership roles to assist others. So much so that Jim was elected chairman of the DAV Board of Directors in 1997, and as National Commander in 2004 (their highest possible office.)

In recognition of his advocacy to others who have sacrificed for our country, Jim received the national award as Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year in 1993. He also was named recipient of the national DAV Freedom Award in 2001. He has now retired to Florida, but is a frequent visitor to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Interview Contacts: Paul Scott Langenfeld, Humanitarian Coordinator, Minnesota SCI.

Telephone: 651-491-8410

[PaulLangenfeld@yahoo.com](mailto:PaulLangenfeld@yahoo.com)

Minnesota SCI, P.O. Box 1303, Burnsville, MN 55337.

Jim Sursley, Disabled Veteran, h: 407-889-3727, c: 407-925-7912.