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Norman County Veterans Service Office

By John Rosenberger

Local Veteran Selected For Elk Hunt

A disabled veteran from Norman County was chosen to participate in an elk hunt sponsored by the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MnEBA). Sergeant First Class (retired) Tim Merkens was selected as the recipient of this year's annual charitable elk hunt at Lake of the Woods. The hunt, coordinated by MnEBA through the generosity of the Lake Superior Chapter of Safari Club International, Access Point Technologies, Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch and Sportsman's Lodge, took place November 28 & 29 near Baudette, MN. This is the second year in a row the MnEBA Charitable Elk Hunt was awarded to a veteran with Minnesota ties.

Tim Merkens is a member of the Ada VFW, the Disabled American Veterans of Crookston, and the Twin Valley American Legion. Tim served four years in the U.S. Navy and 16 years in the U.S. Army before being forced to retire due to medical disabilities. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity for Tim to hunt a bull elk and has become a most memorable experience as well.

Tony Beckel, of Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch provided the guide services, outfitting, and the 1,200 acres of wooded land for the hunt. It was certainly not a walk in the park, and while enduring the cold temperatures and northern winds; Tim was able to enjoy seeing an abundance of white tail deer and a herd of bison who also shared this woodland with the elk. The evasive elk only showed himself one brief time during the first day, pushing the hunt into another day of cold exposure. But then, after only two hours into the second day, the bull elk emerged from the woods at about 100-125 yards from where Tim was posted and Tim employed the old Army cliché: One shot, one kill. The bull elk dropped to the ground without taking another step. Tim said, "This brings back memories of deer hunting with my dad 30 years ago."

The bull was a 13 point atypical elk and weight was estimated at 800 pounds. Tony Beckel dressed the elk and transported it to a local meat locker for processing.

During the hunt, Tim stayed at a lake cabin donated by Sportsman's Lodge, providing comfortable accommodations and a peaceful environment. Travel and meal expenses were donated by the Lake Superior Chapter of SCI and Access Point Technologies, they also provided support for processing the elk including cutting and wrapping of the meat. Access Point Technologies produces cardiology and radiology devices. Mark Hendrickson provided transportation of the two bull elk from southeastern Minnesota to the ranch near Baudette a week before the hunt so they could become familiar with the surroundings. Another elk hunt took place during the same weekend.

Everyone involved with this project just want veterans such as Sergeant Merkens to know that they are deeply respected and appreciated. The Lake Superior Chapter of SCI is very active in offering a number of terminal youth hunts on a yearly basis and are working to expand their projects to this country's war veterans. President Dale Bruder explains, "Veterans so richly deserve anything we can do for them. We (SCI) are working to do more projects with veterans." Steve Berhow of Access Point Technologies (APT) in Rogers, MN echoes these same thoughts. "Personally, I have been involved in hunting since I was a kid. I know it is a great experience for anyone who can be involved in hunting. I am thankful to get involved with the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association in helping a veteran get an opportunity to hunt for a Bull Elk in Minnesota," he says. "We live in a country where none of us should forget the sacrifices that veterans have made for us and our country. So to help one veteran get a chance to hunt an elk in Minnesota is a pleasure and an honor."

For any veteran related questions, please contact your county veterans service officer at (218) 784-5494.



Sergeant Tim Merkens