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Roseau County Iraq Veteran Experiences Elk Hunt

Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MnEBA), December 30, 2010 – Jeff Srisourath, a disabled Iraq veteran from Roseau County, recently experienced the hunt of a lifetime as the recipient of the 4th Annual MnEBA Charitable Elk Hunt. The hunt, coordinated by MnEBA and generously sponsored by Wolf Creek Elk Ranch Inc, Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch and the Lake Superior Chapter of Safari Club International, took place on December 3-4, 2010.

Specialist Jeff Srisourath, a graduate of Warroad High School, joined the Minnesota National Guard in February 2000. He was a member of the Red Bull Unit, Bravo Company serving in Bosnia from 2002-2003, then deployed to Iraq in October of 2005. Jeff was serving on an infantry unit in Iraq when one day, the Bradley Jeff was driving hit an improvised explosive device causing a huge explosion. Jeff was rushed to Camp Fallujah where it was determined he lost most of his left heel.

Over the past four years, Srisourath has spent much time at multiple military hospitals undergoing more than a dozen surgeries to save his foot. Severe setbacks and excruciating pain are Jeff's constant companions; so much so that he's seriously contemplating amputation. The pain and lack of mobility has left Jeff unable to leave the house much of the time.

Jeff has always been an avid hunter and this medical disability has hindered one of his favorite passions in life. However, Tony Beckel of Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch didn't let that stop Jeff from enjoying this very special hunt. Through the help of motorized vehicles and a small amount of tracking by foot, Jeff spent the whole first day looking for the elusive elk. "We tracked the elk all day on Friday but I never saw him," Jeff said. "The elk was like a 'ninja', back-tracking on his own tracks or following other deer tracks." Jeff returned home to catch a good night's sleep then returned early the next morning. This time, Tony brought in additional guides to help find the elk. It wasn't until about noon that Jeff got the first glimpse of his prey. "We came upon the elk and he was bedded down in the brush. He stood up and I took my shot. He took about 4 steps, turned and looked at me, then I shot again and this time, he dropped," Jeff said. Jeff was feeling pretty calm during the hunt, but after he fired the last fatal shot, he said to himself, "Holy cow, I just shot an elk. I was really stoked after the shot." Tony dressed the elk for Jeff and had it transported to a local meat locker for processing. Jeff liked the look of the elk so much that he decided to have the head mounted.

Today, the words he uses to describe his hunt are "really fun" and "awesome". As he tells friends the story of the elk hunt he experienced, Jeff says his friends don't believe he actually shot an elk in Minnesota. But once he brings home the elk head, his friends will become believers.

There are many individuals and organizations involved in making this opportunity possible. They all want veterans such as Specialist Srisourath to know they are deeply respected and appreciated. Wolf Creek Elk Ranch Inc., a family owned Minnesota elk farm, has generously donated the bull. The Wylie family is pleased to be a part of this project. Klint Wylie explains, "My dad and my wife's dad both served in Vietnam. We're happy to be a part of this project as a patronage to the military." The Lake Superior Chapter of SCI is also pleased to play a part in this hunt by helping to pay for expenses. President Dale Bruder was very excited to partner with MnEBA to sponsor an elk hunt to benefit our nation's veterans. "The Lake Superior Chapter of SCI is honored to join these other great organizations to help make this hunt possible for one of our nations' heroes," said Dale.

Tony Beckel of Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch has been an active participant in MnEBA Charitable Elk Hunts for the past four years by offering not only a beautiful 900 acre hunting facility near the Lake of the Woods for the hunt, but also his guide services for this very special hunt. Tony's father was a WWII war veteran and this is an opportunity for Tony to support servicemen and women who richly deserve our appreciation.

MnEBA offers our heartfelt thanks, support and gratitude to Jeff and to all United States military men and women for their service to our country.



Specialist Jeff Srisourath