

## AN IRAQ VETERAN'S FIRST HUNT!

Written by Jeff Mossbrugger



Starting bottom left-Brian Foster, Tim Gurgol (Veteran)  
Back row Jeff Mossbrugger

A minus 10-degree Sunday morning in January is a day I will never forget. I have organized many charity hunts over the years, but this one has to be the most memorable.

We arrived at the ranch in Michigan on Saturday evening. At first light Sunday morning the temperature was -10 degrees, but the excitement for what was about to happen made everyone forget it was the middle of winter. It was Tim Gurgol's (an Iraq war veteran) first time hunting, let alone participating in a big game hunt.

Tim, Brian Foster, our guide and I set out for the ground blind and sat in it for about hour and half. We saw everything from deer to elk but no buffalo. We could see Tim's anticipation growing; he was ready. We received a call over the radio that the buffalo had been spotted on the opposite side of the ranch, so we packed up our gear and moved to another ground blind on the edge of a field. About 20 minutes later, the other group with us spotted the buffalo, and we heard two shots go off in the distance. The voices on the radio called out "one buffalo down and three heading your way". Through the pines off to the right of us, we saw three buffalo running at full speed coming our way. They all made a sharp right turn and were heading into the open field straight toward our blind.

Tim was ready--his gun raised, his adrenaline pumping, his eyes focused! Was this going to be it? As the buffalo got closer, they turned broadside about 10 yards in front of us--still running at full speed, hooves shaking the ground, steam coming out of their noses, eyes locked right on us. It was one of the most majestic sights I have ever

seen! Then they were gone into the woods. We all looked at one another and really didn't have words to describe what had just happened. Something that took less than a minute to take place seemed to be a still picture stopped in time. We collected our thoughts and started talking about the what-ifs. Could a shot have been taken, would it have been a good shot, etc?

Then two other guides who were out radioed in and said they were stopped about 200 yards into the woods, so we waited a few minutes and headed into the woods after them. We spotted them about 150 or so yards in the distance, and our guide whispered: "This is going to be our only chance to get it right." Being a veteran himself, he took Tim ahead and started the stalk, with Brian and me following close behind. They got within 50 yards and he set up for the shot. They started to move around, and then sensed something was near. Suddenly the one Tim wanted turned and opened himself up. Bang! The first shot was off. The buffalo was stunned. It turned, walked a few yards closer to us, and then turned broadside. Bang! The second shot rang out and the buffalo was down. One more shot and it was his!

Good job, Tim! On behalf of Brian and myself, we were very proud to be a part of this hunt and are thankful far beyond what we could ever express to you and all our servicemen and women who sacrifice everything to fight to preserve all the rights and freedoms we enjoy in this great country!

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On January 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, Jeff Mossbrugger of Silver Mountain Taxidermy and Brian Foster of Brian's Deer cutting, along with President Scott Bagi of the Cleveland chapter of Safari Club International, through monies realized from a fund-raising banquet, arranged to take two people on a Buffalo hunt on the Hidden Horn Ranch in Michigan. The first hunter was Tim Gurgol who served with the Marine division in Iraq and was wounded by a roadside bomb. The second was a 14-year-old youth Kenny Koerner who suffers from diabetes. Both hunts were successful and all who participated share memories that will last a lifetime.



Starting left- Ken Koerner, Kenny Koerner, Danny Hitch  
Brent Fisk (ranch owner), and Tim Hitch



Kenny Koerner 14 year old youth hunter with  
his father Ken Koerner.