

Dave Lortscher opened his eyes in Carilion Memorial Hospital’s recovery room and met the gaze of the heart surgeon looking down at him. Tubes, gauges, and all manner of other medical equipment covered all parts of his body. It was 2002, and he had just undergone emergency open heart surgery. His first barely audible question for the surgeon: “Will I be able to hunt again?”

Obviously, he got the answer that he wanted. Since then, Dave has hunted in 13 US states, 4 Canadian provinces, and also in Europe, Africa and South America. He has placed five animals in the World Record Book. Nine more await certified measurement, and are expected to qualify for the record book as well.

Lortscher identifies with TV outdoor star Jim Shockey, with whom he has shared time in hunting camp. “When I’m not hunting,” Shockey says, “I’m thinking about hunting. It’s on my mind, because it’s in my soul.”

Joyce Lortscher, Dave’s wife of 52 years, says “I encourage Dave to hunt, because his preparation includes a lot of exercise and healthy eating, which in turn keeps his heart in good condition.”

Staying in shape is an important component of his preparation. A few years ago, as part of his pre-hunt training, Lortscher had walked 75 miles in one day as a one-man fundraiser for the YMCA. His efforts garnered sufficient funds to build a “tween room” at the Westlake facility.

Hunting is not for everyone, and it certainly has its detractors. Dave explains his perspective on hunting in a way that educates and informs those who may not understand what he does.

“Whenever possible, I hunt for older male animals that have been supplanted as breeding stock by younger, stronger male animals. This is a great conservation practice and benefits the herd tremendously, because I’m removing a redundant animal that would otherwise be

competing for food and water, and that would ultimately be killed by another male in the herd, by predators, or by old age and starvation.”

Lortscher is highly respectful of the animals he harvests. Before field dressing his trophies, he prays over them in the European tradition,

thanking them for their lives, commending their spirits to the afterlife, and promising to use their meat and hides to benefit others. He often thinks of St. Hubert, patron saint and role model for all hunters.

In keeping with this spiritual respect, Dr. Dave insists that every bit of meat be carefully preserved and then used to benefit the community. In addition to providing meat to eight families in Franklin County, he recently donated over 600 pounds of venison to Lake Christian Ministries for distribution. In Argentina, he donated over 1,000 pounds to a local Christian food pantry, and in Africa he provided over a ton of freshly harvested meat to a Christian mission serving some very poor, starving villagers.

Naturally, there is more to the attraction of hunting than merely harvesting an animal. The entire adventure of long-distance travel stimulates him immensely. He begins the process by carefully screening the kind of animal(s) to be sought, the potential travel destinations, and most importantly, the outfitter(s) with whom he intends to hunt. This pre-hunt investigation can take as

long as a year or two. Small wonder, then, that Lortscher already has a “bucket list” that extends two years into the future... for now, at least.

Many months of careful preparation follow. Dave creates a detailed list of everything that he will need to take with him on the hunt, including a very comprehensive first aid kit.



Above: This monster Manitoba elk was 9½ years-old and weighed over 1,000 pounds. Below: This Greater African Kudu is one of Lortscher's Record Book trophies.



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