By Col. Mark Lisi, US Army (Ret.)

The Servicemen and women of today are riding the crest of a patriotic wave that has taken hold of the entire nation. I know that identifying myself as a retired Army officer while seeking hunting access in Montana has opened more doors than it has closed. If you’re a fan of outdoor television, this patriotic wave is very evident. Television Programs like Outdoor Channel’s “Grateful Nation” illustrate that outdoor programmers recognize the value of the veteran. Hosted by Tim Abell, “Grateful Nation” highlights the efforts and sacrifices of the current generation of warriors. Tim and his sponsors, Federal Ammunition and RAM Trucks, sponsor recovering veterans and take them on world-class hunting adventures. Television is one thing, but how many vets get contacted by programs like “Grateful Nation”? I’ve learned that there are many non-profit organizations offering recreational opportunities for wounded veterans. I recently had the opportunity to participate in one such event in northern California.

Tim Abell contacted me and asked if I would like to hunt ducks in California in December. Tim and I share a common background as Army Rangers in the Second Ranger Battalion and I jumped at this chance. I knew nothing of the event other than the place and the date until Tom Dermody of Field of Dreams, Inc., contacted me. When asking Tom what I needed to bring, he informed me that I was being hosted by his non-profit and that all I needed to do was get myself to Sacramento. I asked – innocently – if he knew anyone who hunted hogs in that country and was told to throw a pig gun in my gun box. Oh boy! Did that simple question turn into a world-class adventure!

Once I understood that I was to be a guest of Field of Dreams, Inc., based on my status as a “wounded” veteran, I told Tom that a heart attack was not a real war wound and that I could afford to pay my way if I was still invited. He stopped me with the wave of a hand, told me to find another soldier to accompany me and get to California. The die was cast, and the adventure began.

This adventure isn’t about a handful of wounded vets going hunting; it’s about Americans quietly opening their homes and hearts to the boys and girls who have done the Nation’s bidding. It’s one thing to hear “support the troops,” it’s another event altogether to experience that support. The joke in my family is that “IT” is about me. I can assure you that Tom Dermody, Field of Dreams, Inc., his support families, companies and individuals MAKE IT ABOUT YOU. I found this entire event to be absolutely humbling. I’m uncomfortable when strangers thank me for my service. I generally mutter that I swore an oath and that I never got past the recruiter telling me that I would get free ammo. I loved the work, I loved my soldiers and I love my nation…it doesn’t get much better than that. Tom and his Field of Dreams gave me a unique glimpse into the people of the Great State of California and what veterans mean to them. This was not just an exercise of dollars and access. These folks were genuine to a fault and they couldn’t do enough for us, their guests.

Before I start weeping here, let me tell you about Tom Dermody and Field of Dreams, Inc. (530-681-5396) in Colusa, California.

Tom is the Chief Executive Officer of a bona fide 501c(3) non-profit called Field of Dreams, Inc., which is committed to providing outdoor opportunities to people who might not otherwise have a chance to experience the bounty of the outdoors. The great outdoors is the laboratory and