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# INSTINCTIVE ARCHER®

Fall 2000

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# INSTINCTIVE ARCHER® MAGAZINE

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## From the old oak desk of the Editor



Rik Hinton, Editor.  
Primitive equipment, primitive country, and large, mature game roaming wild and free.  
A perfect combination.

Change is inevitable. Change for the better, however, is rare indeed, and when it occurs, or looms on the horizon, it is time to cheer and help it along. Just such a change may be in the works for Idaho, and perhaps other progressive states as well.

If I am reading my tea leaves correctly, the Idaho Fish and Game Commissioners are concerned about the increasing encroachment of technology into muzzleloader and archery equipment, and may enact future rules to further differentiate between "primitive weapons" and "short-range weapons." ("Primitive" and "short-range" are descriptive terms used in the establishment of special Idaho hunting seasons.) The following is a quote from the March 2-3, 2000, Idaho Fish and Game Commission Meeting notes:

**"ITEM 7.** Discussion on electronic features on weapons. Latest seen by Burns is electronic ignition on rifles. Clower reports on muzzleloaders which feature a combined bullet, charge and electronic firing device and an archery device which allows shooting a four-inch bolt. Hadley suggests study of the issue and establish rules. Moulton suggests considering in retrospect the current rules, that maybe primitive weapons rules are too liberal already. Wood suggests that we might define primitive weapons and differentiate between them and short-range weapons. Department is directed to generate an update on what has been done to date, and some possible ideas on limiting electronic and technological advances on weapons and come back with a report in May."

The phrase that perked my ears up was "...that maybe primitive weapons rules are too liberal already." Amen to that! In Idaho, muzzleloaders and bows (compounds, recurves, and longbows) are considered primitive weapons, and are thus given special seasons due to the increased difficulty of hunting with them. Sidelock and flintlock muzzleloaders, longbows, and recurves are certainly primitive weapons by today's standards. But are the relatively new plastic-stocked, in-line muzzleloaders with high-powered scopes primitive? How about a wheeled bow that shoots a short dart through a tube, with a trigger and fiber-optic sights? I suggest that they fit the definition of a short-range weapon far better than the definition of a primitive weapon. Do not misunderstand me, I enthusiastically endorse and support those who enjoy hunting with technologically sophisticated bows and in-line muzzleloaders, and I enjoy shooting them when my friends who own them let me, but their level of technology does not quite fit with the common-sense definition of a primitive weapon. While they are not primitive, they are certainly challenging short-range weapons, and as such, deserve to be given unique opportunities to hunt.

Both primitive and short-range weapon hunts are excellent tools for fish and game departments to use in managing game herds to meet population goals. As new opportunities arise for future hunts, it is my hope that fish and game commissioners across North America will look first to these groups as management tools. Primitive and short-range weapons have unique limitations that allow them to be used in game-management situations when long-range weapons are not the right tool for the job, such as in areas near population centers, or hunts that are needed to keep large migrations of animals from overwhelming agricultural areas, but that cannot quite support high harvest numbers.

Even more importantly, outdoorsmen who choose to limit themselves by using primitive or short-range weapons are often the most dedicated and experienced of hunters. If you had to choose between providing a new hunting opportunity to run-of-the-mill weekend-warrior rifle hunters, or to the dedicated sportsmen who choose to limit themselves in order to enjoy the hunt more, which would you choose?

Game management is, in reality, hunter management. The future of our game animals, and bowhunting, is in our hands. In that light, please allow me to quote from a Fred Bear elk hunt filmed in the rugged mountains of Wyoming in the early 1960s: "The future of bowhunting is good. Once men beset these proud game animals, and their numbers dwindled. In the maturity of our country, we have wisely conserved them, rebuilt the herds, and hunted with sportsmanship." So may it always be.



## COVER PHOTO BY Rick Williamson:

Ravare with the author's ancient three-piece take-down, which fascinated Espirito Santo Island's primitive people. (See story on page 34).

# ARCHERY CONTROL?

A Guest Editorial by Terry Jamieson

In the ongoing political struggles facing gun owners in our nation, we the archers seem not to recognize that anti-hunters and anti-gun zealots are also opposed to the bow and arrow. As a recreational tool I suppose it is accepted, but as an instrument of animal harvest it is deplored with the same fury as any sophisticated firearm. So what does this mean to the archer in the long run? We will eventually be the targets of liberalism at its poisonous pinnacle, especially if they succeed in gun control legislature that prohibits any form of hunting.

Now that you are questioning whether any of this could really happen, let me clue you in to something very real. My statements about gun and bow control are not far fetched at all, and as a matter of fact, if you are gullible and feel that our numbers are such that it could never happen, then you have already taken the bait.

The antis want you to relax and believe that there is no fight and in the scheme of things this will make you less likely to stay educated on the works of their kind, and inevitably render you impotent as a lobbyist for your cause.

Not long ago I had a lengthy discussion with a friend who supports any agenda that outlaws hunting and weapons, even as recreational objects. He is fundamentally a very good man, but indeed his concept of my life as a hunter is so distorted that it could only have originated from slanted media output.

In the discussion he pointed out the simple savagery of being shot with an arrow, and how it was to him a very inhumane way to take life. The description he painted to me was quite scripted as though he had read it in an anti-hunting editorial in our state's major newspaper. He was calm and civil in his argument, and I let it go on for some time before I countered in the company of several listeners in the dining room of my home.

I described my own life. A man well educated who loves his wife and children deeply. A man who is a devout Christian with a profound respect of all life. A man who believes animals are a natural resource to be properly managed by conscientious hunters with both gun and bow. A man, who respects my friend's opinion, but finds it hauntingly naive.

I asked him if he had ever swatted a fly or mosquito. I asked if he had ever trapped mice in his house.

After he answered yes to both questions, I asked if he thought that those animals had less rights than the large furry ones he so adamantly protected. I asked if he would kill a snake if he saw it in his yard. He finally said "I get the point," but I did not stop there.

As we ate the delicious beef I had prepared for him, I pointed out that he seemed to have forgotten how it came to our table. By now he was without comment. The others at our

dinner table seemed to display a jury face of conviction in his direction. I looked at his expression of confusion and added the observation that in fact the picture I painted for him of my values and love and education were intended to show him that I was not the murdering thug he sees when taking the deceptive bait of the anti-hunting media, and he agreed.

I had demonstrated to him that his views of animals were in fact extremely distorted, and that in real life they violently kill and eat each other, and that we, as humans, are at the top of that food chain and we can choose to be good managers or plunderers. Again he saw my point. The others began to add smiles of understanding as well.

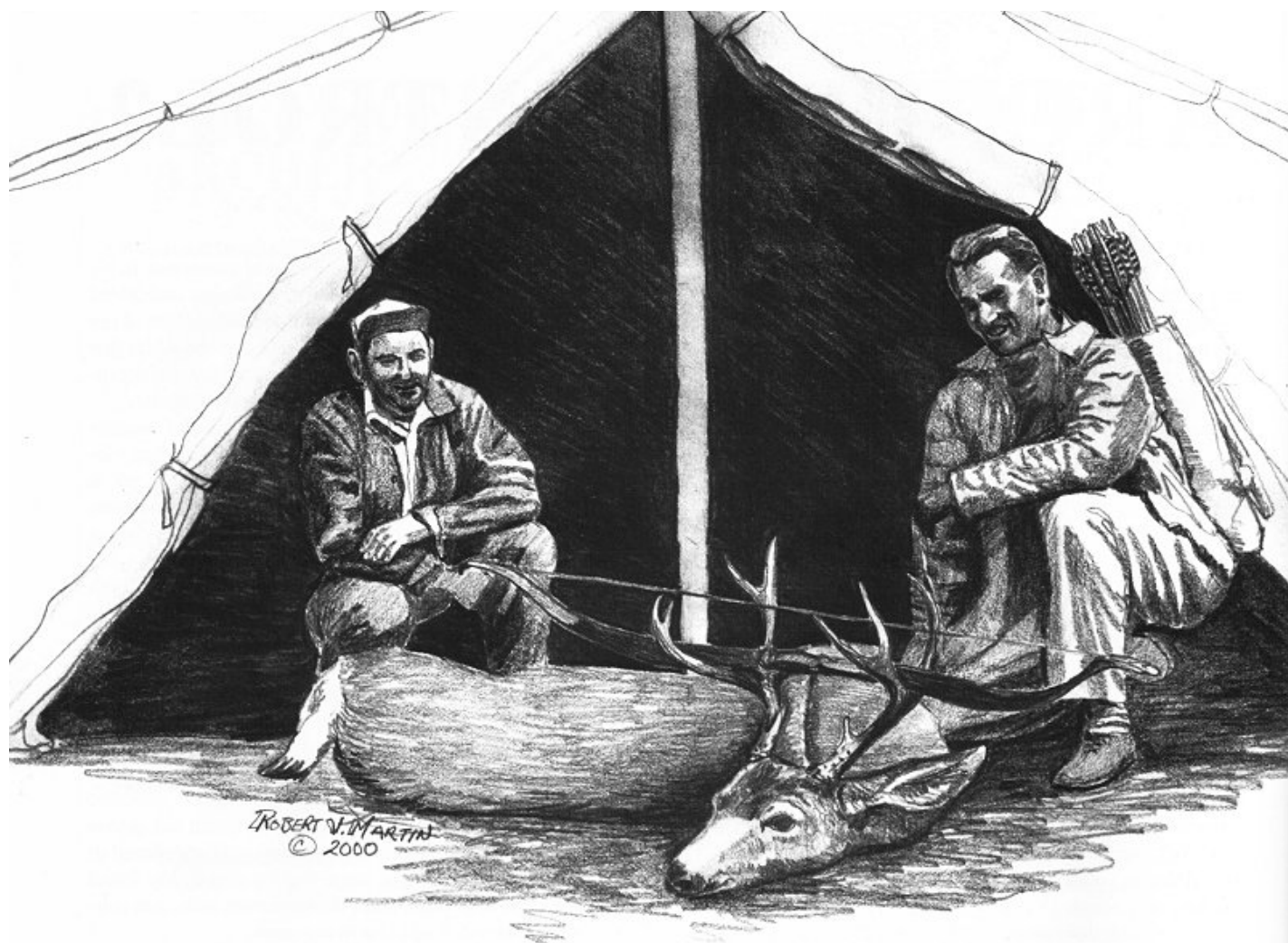
By now I was ready to explain the ballistics of both gun and bow to my humble colleague. The gun part was exhaustive and at times redundant, but the point was well taken—however, the archery breakdown was enlightening to him. The concept of draw weight, and the added arrow weight, and finally the size and keen cutting edge of the lethal broadhead drove home the prowess of this weapon of harvest. By the time I had finished my lecture he firmly understood that our ancient ancestors created a serious weapon when the bow and arrow came to be. I told him to watch the movie *Braveheart* and take note of the importance archery played in the conquests of our military history of the world. My friend had received an education, and I did it all with facts, and delicate words designed to add him to my cause.

Archery or gun hunting are easy targets to the liberal media because they each produce the same end result in the eyes of antis, but the reality is that people are targeting guns right now because they are the weapons in the public eye, used "in" crime, not "causing" crime, and once the firearms world is on its knees, then the battles will shift to archers, and you must be prepared now.

Support gun rights by joining organizations that promote our liberties to own weapons and to hunt. You know what organizations I am referring to. Do not isolate yourself to only the political dimensions of archery, but support any organization that upholds moral hunting and weapon ownership. In the end we all will win, and the public, which is predominately urban and votes absent minded on wildlife and hunting issues, will have no choice but to admit that the views of the anti-hunter and anti-weapon owner are unfounded and without merit.

Be an educated archer with the zeal and passion to protect your sport. Archery control? Do not for one minute think that I am throwing out to you a sensationalist theory. This is as real as gun control, and it looms on the horizon if you close your eyes. We are instinctive archers. Is your shooting instinct as well practiced as your political instinct?





## *Tents, Ten-pointers, and Toxophiles*

By George D. Stout

Even as I step into my fifty-second year on this earth, I still find that there is a ten-year-old boy hiding inside just waiting to run off to the woods with his bow and arrows, and spend a day or two roughing-it. Of course, when you are ten years old that term has a much different meaning than it does when you get older. As I recall, "roughing-it," to a ten year old from South Mountain, meant sleeping on the floor in the living room. However, I have since included the out-of-doors in my modern roughing-it definition. Like that ten year old of the mid 1950s, I still get a weird feeling when sleeping in a tent out there in the woods. I can still hear those sounds of the night, made by creatures known only to those who roam the forest at that time.

Now, however, it is a much more pleasant feeling; not one of fear, but one of anticipation—one of freedom. With my longbow and quiver of arrows by my side, I am as comfortable as if I were on that living room floor. And, there is enough of that ten-year-old left inside of me to enjoy the excitement and sheer joy that is inherent in the act of shooting the bow and arrow at imaginary creatures.

I can vaguely remember my first bow and arrows. The bow was fashioned from a limb from the back yard lilac bush and the arrows from

small branches or golden rod stems, or whatever happened to be handy at the time. Although the equipment was crude at best, it still enabled me to hit a cardboard box at upwards of ten yards. The poor efficiency of the weapon did not detract one iota from the sheer joy it allowed me. On the contrary, I thought it the perfect weapon—silent and deadly; if only on cardboard boxes. I still have that same feeling today, regarding the longbow. I still consider it the perfect weapon; subtle, powerful, beautiful, and with a past rich in historical significance.

Tents are another item that rank high on my list of favorite things, they are a perfect accessory for the bowhunter. Tents make a wonderful starting place to recreate those hunts of old. They lend themselves well to hunting with the longbow. With just a little imagination I can picture a tent, pitched in a meadow by a mountain stream, an open fire with a pot of tea boiling over the coals, and a longbow and quiver of arrows hanging from the shelter's ridge pole. Add to this several archers spinning tales of past hunts and you have the perfect picture of bowhunting.

The scene speaks of Maurice Thompson's sorties into the wilderness of the 1870s Florida Everglades. His only companions being his tent for shelter and his longbow and arrows for acquiring wild game to supplement his larder. Thompson's writings can still fuel the fire of the toxophile to an extent

It offers a return to the archery of old; the archery that Maurice wrote so eloquently about. The challenge of casting aside the easy way and embracing the Sport of Kings as it was meant to be practiced. . .

unknown to the high tech bowhunter of today.

The traditional archer can still hunt the same woods as Thompson, in most cases, and he can still use the same equipment that he used. The wondrous self-wood bows are making a come back in archery circles of the day. Many hunters are tiring of technology and its drawbacks, its awkwardness and lack of aesthetic value. They are returning to the challenge of "olde time archery."

That challenge is still there, as it was hundreds of years ago. The longbow opens that door to the past. It offers a return to the archery of old; the archery that Maurice wrote so eloquently about. The challenge of casting aside the easy way and embracing the Sport of Kings as it was meant to be practiced; by strength, instinct, and intellect, and with a sense of history and romanticism. This is what makes the longbow so enchanting. The hum of the longbow string is the siren-song to the true archer, tempting us to take it up and head for the greenwood. Luring us with its guile, its historic legacy, its sense of fairness.

I currently own three longbows. They all seem to have their own unique

personalities. One is an old lemonwood flatbow made by York Archery; the other two are laminated bows—a maple straight limb model that I made myself, and the other a laminated osage/bamboo flatbow. I don't imagine ever parting with the lemonwood. I took a buck with it in 1992. And, I will of course keep the

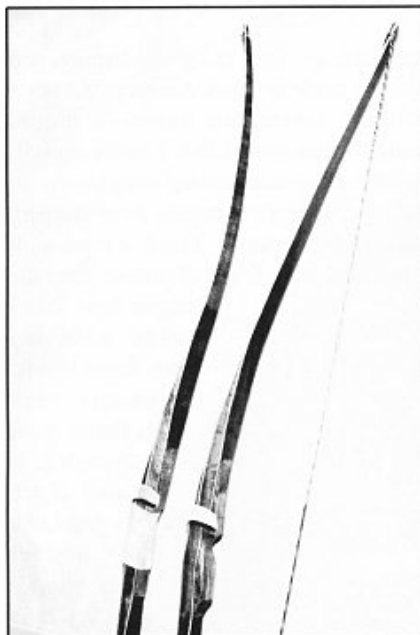
maple bow that I made with my own three hands. It shoots very well, thank you, even though it is not a work of art. And, I would like to take a deer with it to bring it full circle. It is quite functional and, in its own way, a beautiful bow. I have not shot the osage/bamboo

too much and may decide to use it for trading fodder at one of the yearly traditional gatherings.

The real joy from longbows comes when you shoot them. They seem to have their own personalities. . . their own traits. They are simple, beautiful, and effective. To me, archery is at least 50 percent aesthetics. The flight of the arrow, the beauty of the bow itself, and the feeling it gives you when carried in the woods. There is nothing so beautiful as an arrow launched in a high arc from a longbow. The hum of the string, the "swoooooosh" of the feathers, the thud of the shaft striking home—it is the food of poets and toxophiles alike. It is why we love the sport as we do and why we clamor about it so much.

I look forward, with much anticipation, to this hunting season. My friends and I plan to set up our tent by the singing brook. We will talk of ten-point bucks and missed opportunities. We will reminisce of hunts past and dream of future ones. And, whether we harvest any game will be of little consequence on this hunt. We will have been successful just being there; sharing the camaraderie and companionship of traditional bowmen.





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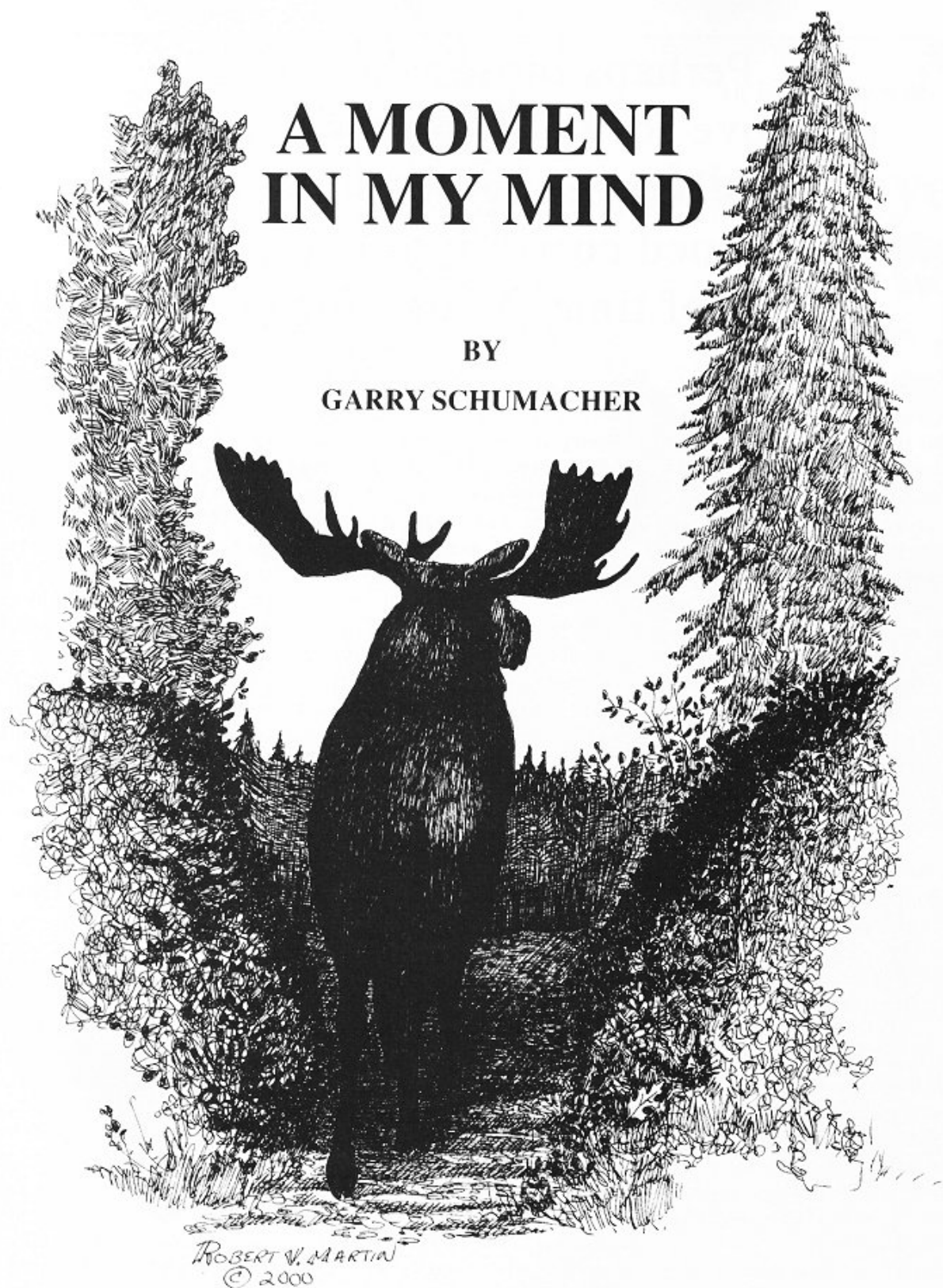
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# A MOMENT IN MY MIND

BY  
GARRY SCHUMACHER

Have you ever walked down an overgrown, long unused logging road? An old road that has grass growing completely through the hard packed areas where countless tires and heavy loads once compacted the soil to its hardest. If you hunt with the bow, you likely have. Certainly by now the road is strewn with fallen trees and a thick carpet of leaves

## Perhaps those who have no love for the wilderness would feel traveling this long abandoned corridor to be a waste of time. Not so for me.

and decaying vegetation. As you pass along this forgotten trail your thoughts drift back to a time long ago. Perhaps you wonder about the people who passed here before you. Perhaps you think back to the ancient methods they might have used to cut the timber and the methods used to remove it to the sawmills that utilized it, either near or possibly miles away.

There are ample roads to fit this description, some many decades old. Each of us that hunts has no doubt at times had opportunity to traverse or cross these long-forgotten corridors through our forests. Today they belong mainly to the forest dwellers, often traveled by the prey species or the predator in search of his next meal

One such road in particular is a favorite of mine. Carved through the varied forest of North Central Alberta, it wanders and twists like a serpent following the valleys, at times elevating to follow a ridge top and then dipping once again to the lowlands never far below. The road is not particularly long in total length. As one follows it to its destination one is surprised to find that, though it meanders at length through the forest, it terminates only a short distance from the point where it began.

Perhaps those who have no love for the wilderness would feel traveling this long abandoned corridor to be a waste of time. Not so for me. Each year during September I find myself once again traveling along its length.

There is a section that passes through the towering spruce and pine where the shaded soil can support only the finest and most delicate of grasses and vegetation. Here the animal traffic maintains a constant pathway along its route, evidence that even the mighty moose and the magnificent stag prefer the ease of passage it provides as opposed to bulldozing through the thick surrounding forest.

In my mind, I am there now and I walk slowly, softly, ever alert to the sounds and sights that surround me. Walking quietly comes easy if you stay on the well-used animal trail. As I approach one of the lower areas which on a wet year will be soft and damp, I chance upon a nice fresh scrape, made precisely on the trail itself. Deeply embedded in the soft soil surrounding the scrape are the broad tracks made by the cloven hoof of the "King of the Forest." The pungent musky smell of moose urine hangs in the area confirming that which I already know, this scrape is only hours old.

I squat to more closely examine the tracks. As I do, I imagine this monarch of the forest as he tore the earth with his hooves. Perhaps he grunted and snorted, and shook his mighty head while raking his massive antlers through the surrounding grass and shrubs. Standing more than seven feet at his shoulders he would indeed present a magnificent sight as he voices his challenge and makes his mark upon the earth.

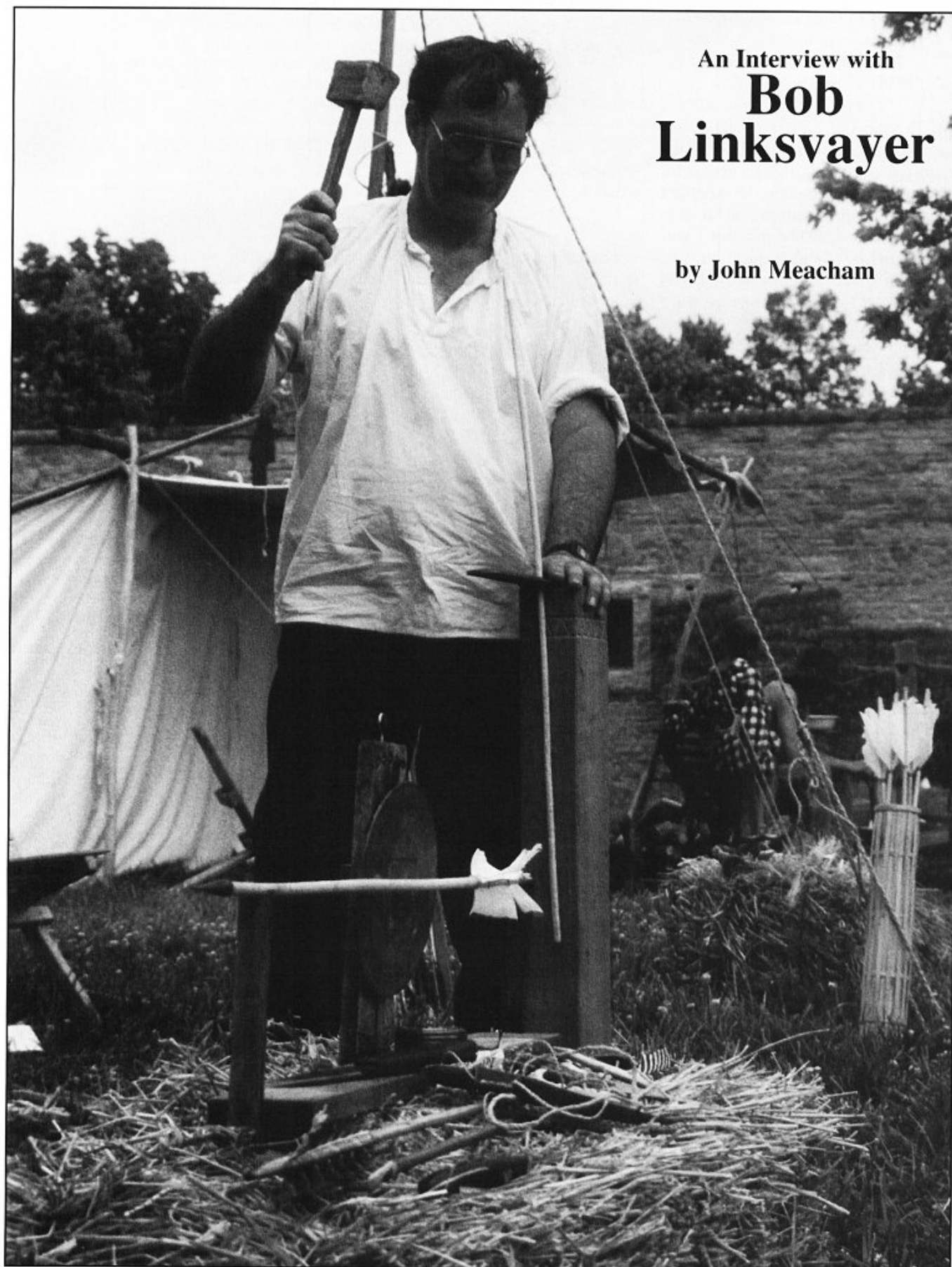
Satisfied, I turn and begin to retrace my route back to our camp. Quietly, even more cautious now than when I came, I leave the area. It is my hope that my presence there will not have been noticed. For the moment I have seen enough. Later with my son, I will return, as stealthily as I leave. Later, just a few hours before the fall of night, with my birch bark horn I will try to sound like the siren cow. Coaxing, moaning, my call will echo through the lowlands encapsulated by the timber covered ridge. By emulating the seductive moan of a receptive female I will draw this rut crazed, hormone saturated bull back to his sign post on the forest floor.

Close at hand will be my trusted longbow, crafted by myself, mated to a shaft of birch that is tipped with a shaving sharp double bladed obsidian broadhead. With me comes a "Feathered Death" for the unwary.

If I succeed the bull will die, lured to his death by an urge that he is unable to control. If I succeed, I will dine the next few months on nature's finest offering. Strangely though, should I fail I will not leave with disappointment, rather I will take away with me a treasured memory of an unforgettable moment, a moment of bonding with my son and with nature.

In position now, I raise the Birch Bark horn to my lips. As I do so a thought envelopes me. "I am so lucky..."





An Interview with  
**Bob  
Linksvayer**

by John Meacham

**B**ob Linksvayer developed his passion for archery because his father was concerned about the safety of his son and his hounds.

"I built my first bow when I was 13 years old, with my dad's help," Linksvayer, founder and president of the Primitive Archers of Illinois, said. "When he wasn't around, he wouldn't let me go hunting with the rabbit dogs with the break-open shotgun that I normally carried. My next question was, 'Dad, can I take the dogs out if I hunt with a bow?' He knew at the time that I didn't have a bow, so he said, 'Sure. Just make sure you don't shoot the dogs.'"

"I grew up in the Collinsville-Edwardsville area, which had many, many Indian artifacts on the ground and under the ground, so I drove him nuts by asking him questions about how the Indians did everything," Linksvayer continued. "When I asked how the Indians built their bows, he said, 'I have no idea, and I don't know anybody who's building bows.'"

*Photo on previous page: Bob Linksvayer drives an arrow shaft through his die, a flat piece of steel with holes drilled in mounted on a 4x6. "After I drive it through one of the holes, I'll bring it over here to the spine tester (foreground) and check it to see what the spine of the arrow is. If it's too high, I'll take it through the next hole. That's how I control the spine weight of the arrow I'm making."*

The elder Mr. Linksvayer didn't let the matter drop, though. He took his son to the library.

"At that time, the libraries didn't carry very much about Indian archaeology or Indian anything, and the librarian found a couple books for me on European archery in archaeology books," Linksvayer said. "The nice thing about archaeologists is, every time they take a picture of an artifact, there's a ruler in the picture, and that got me started, so one of the things I do on every bow I build is meticulously measure everything for future reference."

"I made that first bow from a hickory sapling," Linksvayer said. "It worked very well at close range. I built another one after the hunting season was over. It was another hickory bow, but it was better finished and a lot more powerful. Dad had given me a piece of chalk-line for my first bowstring. The second bow required new string, because the old line wouldn't stay in one piece."

Now 58, Linksvayer is a school psychologist by profession. He also teaches bow building classes at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, where he resides. To further educate the public, he and three friends set up a working 18th century archery shop at the 1999 Rendezvous at Fort de Chartres State Historic Site near Prairie du

Rocher, Illinois. The Rendezvous is a recreation of the traditional French fur trapper's holiday, complete with buckskinners, French Marines, Royal Highlanders, Territorial Rangers and other militiamen, Native Americans, artisans, and entertainers. The event annually draws up to 40,000 spectators.

"This is my third year at the Rendezvous, and we'll be back in 2000," Linksvayer said. "I started out three years ago in the fort working by myself and had hundreds of people around me all the time. That's why I started recruiting other people to help out. There are four of us here today."

"We primitive people—most of us, anyway, build everything from scratch," Linksvayer continued. "My arrows come out of an ash tree or an osage orange tree or a hickory tree. Bows the same way."

Using the equipment from his own archery shop, Linksvayer explained and demonstrated the process of building either Eastern Woodland-style bows or European-style flat bows.

"The first step in building a bow is to size up a tree and cut it down," he said. "I start out with six-foot sections of a log and then split the log into what are called staves. Then the staves have to be seasoned. Looked at from the end, the staves look like a section of a pie. I use

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Bob Linksvayer's arrow planing jig consists of two boards cut at 45 degree angles, in which he lays a piece of 1/2 inch square stock and hand planes it to take off the corners. When a shaft is nearly round, he takes it to the die shown at the beginning of this article and pounds it through. He is shown here planing a cottonwood shaft. Cottonwood makes good arrows, but he finds that hickory and ash split easier because they are straighter grained.

hickory, osage, red oak, white oak and sometimes black locust. Black locust is an iffy proposition at best."

The primitive bow builder next goes to the chopping block, where he roughly shapes the stave with a hewing hatchet, Linksvayer said. Then it's on to the bow bench.

"The bow bench is nothing but a giant clamp to hold the bow while the drawknife and other tools are used to take off the excess wood," he said. "The rule of thumb is to start with a tool that takes off a lot of wood, like the hewing ax, and progress to tools that take off less wood but give the user much more control over how much wood is removed."

"After the limbs start to bend, then we use a vertical pole called a tillering board and an extra long string to gently bend the limbs of the bow to find out where the limbs are not bending properly," Linksvayer continued. "Then it's a long, drawn out process of taking off some excess wood where it's not bending and testing it again and keeping on until it's bending properly."

As he talked and worked, Linksvayer mixed a lot of history with the how-to.

"Most people, when they think of an all-wood bow, think of an English longbow," he said. "The English longbow requires yew wood, basically, to be built, because the English longbow is basically a tapered square. Other woods, such as osage and hickory, can be used to build the longbow, but because of the properties of the woods, the results are not as good as when using yew. The stave starts out to be square in shape, so the bow is as wide as it is deep, and then the belly of the bow is rounded and the back of the bow is flat, whereas our flat bows are flat on the back and the belly. The wider the better, in terms of taking the stress of pulling the bow back."

"If we're talking about reproducing Indian bows, then in the southeastern United States the Cherokee would have used black locust. I don't have any Indian blood in me, so I don't reproduce Indian bows," Linksvayer added. "I have taught Indians to build their own style bows, but I just honor their tradition and I don't do it."

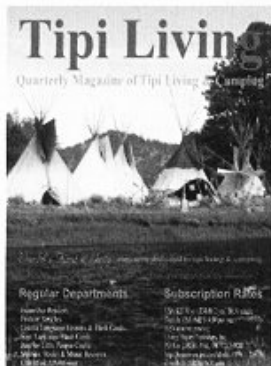
Linksvayer said it takes him from 10 to 15 hours to build a bow. Of course, even the best bow is worthless without a string and arrows, so Linksvayer builds those components, too.

"I grow flax in my garden and then process the flax and spin it into thread, and from thread go to the bowstrings, so that's a long, involved process," he said. "I had a gentleman last year ask me what I would charge to build him a bowstring. I explained the whole process to him and said I thought maybe \$75 would be fair."

"The arrow jig is basically a flat board with a V slot cut in it to hold the arrow shaft while the arrow maker shapes it," Linksvayer explained. Once the arrow maker splits the wood into squares, he takes it down to semi-round with a plane and then hammers it through a steel plate with a series of holes in it.

"I control the spine weight—the bendability of the arrow—by driving it through the series of holes until I get it to the right point," Linksvayer said, adding that he measures the amount of flex in the arrow with a spine tester.

"Each bow requires a different spine in the arrow," he said. "The machine that I built is basically a round protractor that allows me to convert the angle of deflection in degrees to a spine weight. It's one of the simplest spine testers I've seen, and the most accurate."



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The author working on a new bow with his drawknife. He begins by first shaping a stave with his hewing axe, then shaves off excess wood with the drawknife until the bow is bending perfectly. Bob also teaches bowbuilding classes at Lincoln community College in Springfield, Illinois.

"The arrows not only have to balance in terms of the spine weight, but also the actual weight of the arrow," Linksvayer added. "The English used their coinage for the last thousand years to weigh the arrows. I read an article about the English and their balancing beams, and the gentleman was nice enough to give the weights of the English coinage. I don't have any English coinage, so I weighed our coinage and I use our quarters and nickels and dimes and pennies." Linksvayer said he stopped counting his bows after he'd built 500.

"I have 25 to 30 bows in my den right now," he said. "I have a few favorites that I practice with constantly because they're the ones I hunt with. I have a red oak bow that's only 48 pounds, but at 25 yards I can basically shoot the eye out of a gnat with it. I typically hunt with a 70-pound hickory bow or a 90-pound osage bow. I do lots of practice with the arrows that I use and the points that I use to make sure they fly correctly so that when I'm in the stand, all I have to do is look at the hair I'm going to hit and I hit it."

"I normally take two deer a year with my bows, so they are capable of delivering a lethal punch," Linksvayer continued. "Last year (1998) was the first year we were able to use flint points here in Illinois. I had a little bit to do with

that. I testified before one of the subcommittees. After the season, I was called back to answer questions about flint points. The feedback I've gotten is that everybody is quite happy with flint points. I took a doe last year with a flint point, and I also make my own steel points in the trade point fashion. I took another doe with one of those. Both points from my 70-pound bow went completely through the deer."

Linksvayer said it wasn't difficult to convince the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to consider flint points. "They basically did their homework," he said. "There are, I think, approximately 20 other states that allow flint points, so they asked for the official language. Some states get super picky in terms of how the stone points are supposed to be, and other states just say 'stone points,' period. What Illinois did was pick a happy medium and use the description as is for the steel points and specified the stone points have to be of flint, chert, or obsidian—same size and everything else. The regulations do not specify a weight, just a size. It can't go through a 7/8 inch hole. The stone points are generally lighter than the steel points. A typical stone point that can't go through a 7/8 inch hole is going to be from 70 grains up to 100 grains, whereas typically the steel point is 125 grains."

Hickory is the best wood for the beginning bow builder, Linksvayer said. "It's one of the hardest woods, and it's very hard for a neophyte to mess up," he said. "The wood is so hard that after it's been through the drying process, it's like working machined aluminum. With a drawknife, the wood comes off so fine you could stuff a pillow with it."

Building a bow is an exercise in physics, because each wood has its own characteristics, Linksvayer added. "That's one reason I take many, many measurements of every bow that I build," he said. "If I start with a brand new wood, that's a whole new experience. Normally what I try to do is build the heaviest bow I can out of an experimental wood to see what it will tolerate. What I've found over the years is that red oak is good for bows up to about 65 pounds. After that, the physical dimensions of the bow are so great that there's

a problem with what's called 'string follow.' There's so much wood there that the back of the bow is stretched and the belly of the bow is compressed, so it makes no sense to try to build heavy bows out of a wood that can't stand it."

"With hickory, I can build a bow of any power you want. Osage is exactly the same way, but the problem with osage is that the sapwood has to be taken off. The sapwood is white, and you have to get down to the first good ring of yellow heartwood to make a stable bow. The white sapwood is not strong enough to act as the back of the bow. You spend days just getting down to the first ring that's good. It's not for somebody that's just starting out. With hickory, all you have to do is take off the bark and the inner bark and you're to the first ring."

"The different woods also have their own timetables for drying and the bowyer must learn to season staves largely by trial and error," Linksvayer said. "The stave begins losing moisture almost immediately from the sides that are exposed. The ends of the stave must be sealed to prevent checking and cracking. Moisture loss is controlled by sealing the ends and leaving the bark on for a period of time. The atmosphere around here will allow the stave to get down to about 15 to 20 percent moisture content after the bark is removed. They have to be down to nine to ten percent moisture content in order to make a spring. Basically, a bow is just two springs with a handle, so about ten percent is the right moisture content to allow those cells to maintain integrity. To reach that ideal condition, the stave must be heated gently in a drying oven."

"The Native Americans rubbed fat on the bow and hung it high over the fire," he said. "They would take it down every so often, scrape off additional wood and re-grease it. Wood starts to resonate when it is tapped at about 10 percent moisture content, so a meter isn't needed—just a good sense of tune. If you go down to five percent like most kiln-dried wood is, there isn't enough moisture there and the wood becomes too brittle. It is especially critical to dry a black locust stave properly. If it dries too fast, it starts a check that goes from the back of the bow to the belly of the bow, and

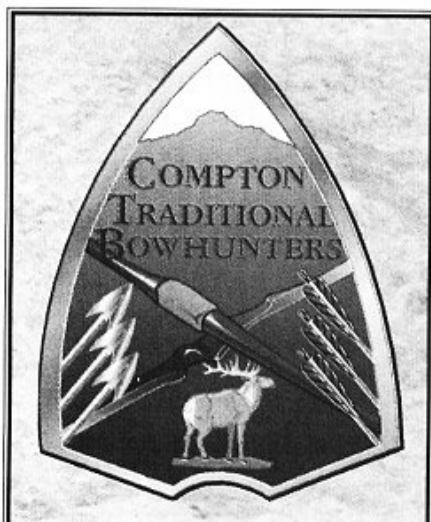
that's a piece of firewood. It's a 50-50 proposition whether you're going to get a bow out of it or not. It's not a good wood for someone who's just starting to try to build bows."

Linksvayer said man has had a long time to learn to build bows right. "My favorite design is from a Danish hunter-gatherer group and it has been carbon dated at over 10,000 years old," he said. "It's called a Holmegaard, and it's one of the most efficient bows that I've found. Archery in Europe actually goes back 20,000 years. There are cave drawings in Spain, France, and Africa that show archers, and they've been carbon dated at 20,000 years. Here in America, a thousand years at best."

"Bow building was part of the guild system on Europe," Linksvayer continued. "There would have been guilds and shops that did nothing but make arrows, and there was a supply and demand system—for instance, when the English were fighting the French and had their battles. There's a book, 'The Social and Military History of the English Longbow,' where the author states that in any particular battle there would have been 15 hundred archers arrayed in a semicircle with men at arms between them and cavalry backing them up. You can imagine the number of arrows that would have had to be supplied for that kind of firepower. There were shops dedicated to just making arrows and shops dedicated to making the longbows and families and groups that did nothing but make strings."

"Most of the information was a deep, dark secret, because every craft—every skill—preserved their knowledge and handed it on to apprentices and family members, because that was their livelihood," Linksvayer added. "By keeping everything secret, they kept the competition down."

Linksvayer said the archery shop he and his friends set up at the Rendezvous is typical of one that would have existed in England or America during the 18th century. "One thing people don't realize is that the European peoples brought their bows with them," he said. "In fact, Benjamin Franklin advocated during the Revolutionary War that some of the troops be equipped with longbows,



#### *It's Time*

A group of traditionalists from across the country has decided that we can no longer wait. Forces have gradually been sweeping us under the rug. They would like us to go away. The traditional archery community needs to be brought together to once again become a prominent factor. It's time to rise and take back our place in the sun. Those before us numbered in the tens of thousands, and they proved the traditional bows—recurves and longbows—a viable hunting tool. The record is clear. It is now time to insure the identity of the traditional way for future generations. The natural resources departments will once again see our short-range bows as a low impact management tool—this we will encourage and pursue. It is also a great source of hunting enjoyment. Come join us as a member of the Compton Traditional Bowhunters.

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because they were so much more efficient than the guns of the time. After the war, American aristocrats and other people with money continued to shoot bows for recreation," Linksvayer said.

"There are lots of pictures from the late 1800s of men in their top hats and long coats and ladies in their bustles shooting bows at clubs. Ishi is credited with the discovery of primitive archery in California, but that's all wrong. There were people with money who were shooting longbows on the East Coast since the Pilgrims arrived. After the Civil War, there was a second discovery of archery again with 'The Witchery of Archery' by Maurice Thompson. The equipment that I've got would have been used in the eastern United States in large cities for bowyers that were supplying bows and arrows to people who had money."

Today, people are eager to take the bow building courses he teaches. "It takes four complete Saturdays," he said. "People start out with a stave and they walk away with a bow. There's usually a

waiting list. When there are eight people who want to take the class, we set a class up. I don't like to have any more than that, because it's hard for me to keep track of what everybody is doing. I want people to be successful at it and not walk away with a failure, and eight is kind of the magic number."

Linksvayer said his students have come from varied backgrounds and have had different motives for wanting to build a bow. "I've had people as old as 75," he said. "For youngsters, I require that a parent come with them. I've had a couple of 15 year-olds, and the youngest I've had was a 12-year-old girl. Her dad came, too, and both were able to build a bow. The bow may be for hunting or target shooting. I asked my first class what size bows they wanted to build and a man from Quincy said he wanted to build a 70-pound bow. I asked him why he wanted to build such a heavy bow. He said, 'I want to go to Quebec and moose hunt.' A couple weeks after the season, he came back, and he'd shot a bull moose. He said his arrow was hanging from the

other side of the moose, so he did a good job."

"A primitive bow will do everything a modern compound bow will do, provided the archer practices with it," Linksvayer said.

"It takes lots of practice, because the bows are shot instinctively," he explained. "That means no sights, nothing else—your body becomes part of the sighting system. You're not looking down the arrow and you're not looking at anything except the spot that you're going to hit, and that takes lots of practice. Obviously, after teaching people how to build a bow and build their arrows, the next step is to teach them how to shoot the bow. The final test is to be able to put out a candle at 15 yards with the bow when it's pitch black, which means they can't depend on anything else except their instinctive ability to bring that bow up to the anchor point and let the arrow go. That's the acid test. By the end of the evening, they're all able to do it."



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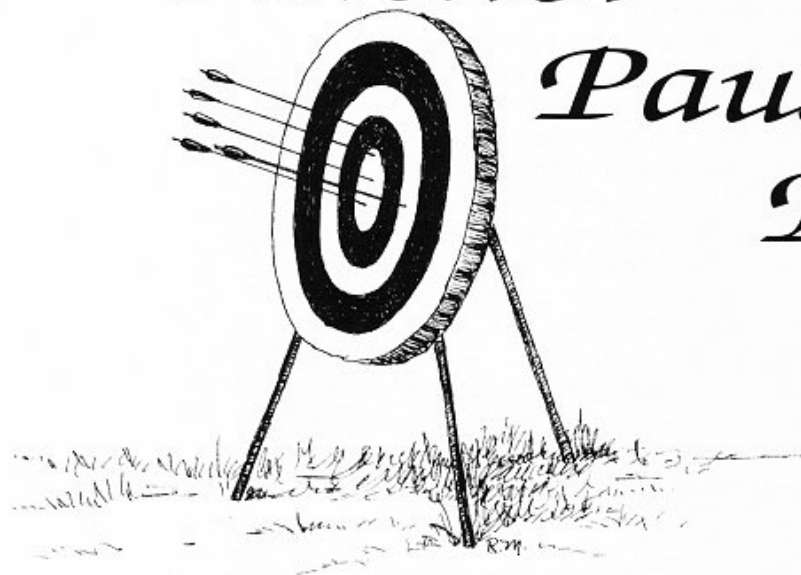
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# Draw

# Anchor

# Pause

# Relax



*By Red W. Chavez*

**I**n the never ending search for accuracy, we come around to the debatable question of anchor point and how long do we hold, or do we even stop and hold at all. Just what is the right way to complete this part of the shot process?

This question has been the subject of many phone conversations and much letter writing since I did the article on instinctive shooting a few issues ago. The majority of the individuals who have called me want to know how long to hold at anchor and/or what is the advantage to holding at anchor, as opposed to "snap shooting."

First of all, let's examine the mental aspects of the shot process. The act of instinctive shooting, just like martial arts, most athletic endeavors, quick-draw western shooting, and tying your shoes, is based on repetitive action. The average person needs to complete a task 3,000 times for that action to approach the instinctive level, then the action must be repeated at regular intervals, or it may lose its instinctive status in the halls of hand eye co-ordination. That last statement is the heart of what makes a good traditional shooter; it is also the main reason individuals leave our ranks and return to training wheels and sights, where the need for constant practice is less imperative.

If you have heart, and do the necessary practice, that is, repetition, you will eventually become a mediocre shooter, and in my experience, that is about 90% of traditional shooters. Now, if you are dedicated, in good shape, with good eye

sight and have little or no stress in your life, that same amount of practice done correctly will elevate you to a good traditional shooter and you will join an elite group of about 8%. And then comes the masters of their own destiny, that 2% that have all of the above qualifications, plus the inherited quick reflexes and natural hand-eye coordination of champions. You hear their names often and their game pole is always bent under the weight of their success.

The successful completion of the shot process is based on the smooth progression through the individual steps of that process. When done correctly, the shot will appear as one step, done fluidly and decisively, without "herky-jerky" movement. If, for a brief moment, you feel the pangs of indecision, it is best to let down and survey the situation before beginning the process again. Once the process begins, there's no room for conscious thought, everything should be instinctive. A major part of the learning process is your mental state. You must be in the frame of mind to let the shot flow naturally, and a good way to achieve that "frame of mind" is to practice visualizing the shot. A practice I do often, both at work and at home, is to pick a spot, look through that spot, degrade into that stupor of concentration and push-pull the bow arm and drawing hand to the anchor position. Keep your concentration on a "through the spot" release by relaxing your drawing hand. Relaxing your drawing hand, in this visualization, does not entail finger movement; just the thought of relaxation sends the imaginary arrow through the spot, always, your arrow goes through the spot; positive thinking in progress. Notice, if you will, that when you pick a spot at a further distance, your bow hand will stop at or above (depend-

ing on how far away your spot is) the spot. And, if you are concentrating, it will appear that you are looking through your bow hand to the spot. In fact, if you close your non-dominant eye, the spot will be covered by your bow hand. Now, if you think about this, you are looking at hand-eye coordination without even shooting. Remember this little practice hint and use it after you have done a good measure of the real thing. Your brain will have memory of the bow hand placement for various yardages, and through those times when you cannot get out to do the real thing, you can visualize the process and refresh your memory.

Back to reality, as your bow arm/hand reaches extension and your drawing hand reaches anchor, your brain kicks in and tells your bow hand/arm where to stop. That message sent, you reach anchor. As you reach anchor, you must give your bow arm/hand time to react to your brain's command to stop; then, the brain kicks in again and tells the drawing hand to relax. Message sent, acted upon, and done, arrow gone. All this happens in a very brief space of time. It is a major part of the shot process and must be learned and practiced to the infinite. In the beginning, slow everything down and draw out the amount of time spent on each step. Say the words, to yourself, as you do the steps; that is, Dr-r-a-a a-a-a-a-w, A-n-c-h-o-o-o-o-o-r, R-e-l-a-a-a-x-x-x.

Make it a smooth, stop free motion. As you progress, the step will take less and less time, but always be aware that the anchor phase needs a slight bit more time, as the bow arm/hand needs time to react to the brain's instruction; hence, the short pause in the shot process before release. This process of waiting for the bow hand/arm to stop gives better shot to shot consistency; which is generally the main problem for snap-shooting. There are exceptions to that rule, but for most of us, if the bow arm is moving at the time of release, you can never be sure where the arrow is going. You may hit the 3D deer in the kill one time and in the butt the next. When you're hunting, you don't know which shot you're going

to shoot. Shot-to-shot consistency is the name of the game, and it is best accomplished by a steady bow arm/hand.

So, yes, in my opinion, you do need to have a short pause at anchor before releasing. That said, each and every one of us is different and we accomplish our tasks at a different rate; so, take only the time you need to, then relax and the arrow will be gone. If you feel uncomfortable with the amount of time you are holding, then let down and start again. It is all about having control of the shot and knowing when the feeling is right. Sometimes it happens before you realize you've done it, but, after all is said and done, practice, practice, practice, and develop you own style into the upper level of instinctive shooting. We all have it in ourselves to approach that winning two percent, all we need to do is be dedicated and do the practice—correctly. Shoot 'em straight, slow, and easy.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Having entered the realm of traditional archery at a time when there were few traditional tournament shooters, W. Red Chavez is a proclaimed self taught shooter, whose accomplishments are highlighted by two NFAA national championships, many state and regional championships in both the Northwest and Southwest sections.

More recently, though, he has been active in the IBO tournament scene with three Northwest Triple Crown championships, both with a long bow and a recurve. As a bowyer, Red knows what it takes to make a good shooting bow and he doesn't take any shortcuts in the process of making bows to fit each customer's shooting style. The custom fit and feel of these bows has given many an archer the confidence needed to achieve their goals.

Red can be reached at [406] 273 0558, or by e-mail at:

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### Association of Traditional Hunting Archers

We are pleased to announce the formation of the **Association of Traditional Hunting Archers**, a new national organization developed for the traditional archer. Its purpose is to provide a home where we can hang our hats, a home from which we can gain strength and grow. Though ATHA's focus is upon the hunting archer, its foundation rests upon the love of the same traditional archery tackle that unites hunter with rover, rover with recreational archer, and all of us with our past. ATHA aims to reinforce that foundation, to be a positive voice for archery, both within the community of archers and with state wildlife agencies, to present its true form and identity to the public, and to build its future.

For a copy of our mission statement, a list of our goals and a membership application, please mail to: Craig Oberle, C/O American State Bank, P. O. Box 197, Mellette, SD 57461

Please visit us at our website <http://tmuss.tripod.com/TA>, where this same information and a membership application are available, as well as a copy of our charter. Signed, ATHA Steering Committee, Doug Borland, Cory Mattson, Tom Mussatto, Craig Oberle, John Rook, Dale Sharp, Lon Sharp, Dean Torges, Mark Viehweg, Larry Yien, Jim Dahlberg, Chairman.



# ***KNOWING***

By Mark Siedschlag

When I first began hunting with the bow and arrow at the age of 12, I believed the frail looking stick and string I held in my hand was capable of killing a full grown deer, but I didn't yet know for sure. I had seen deer killed with a bow, dozens, but I had never actually accomplished the feat myself. I was a believer, but I had not yet joined the ranks of a knower. That all changed one beautiful Indian summer day when, at the bright-eyed age of 14, I stood in awe over a very dead whitetail doe that had achieved her present state because of the frail-looking stick and string I held in my hand. I had passed from a believer to a knower and found myself full of newfound confidence in the bow and arrow.

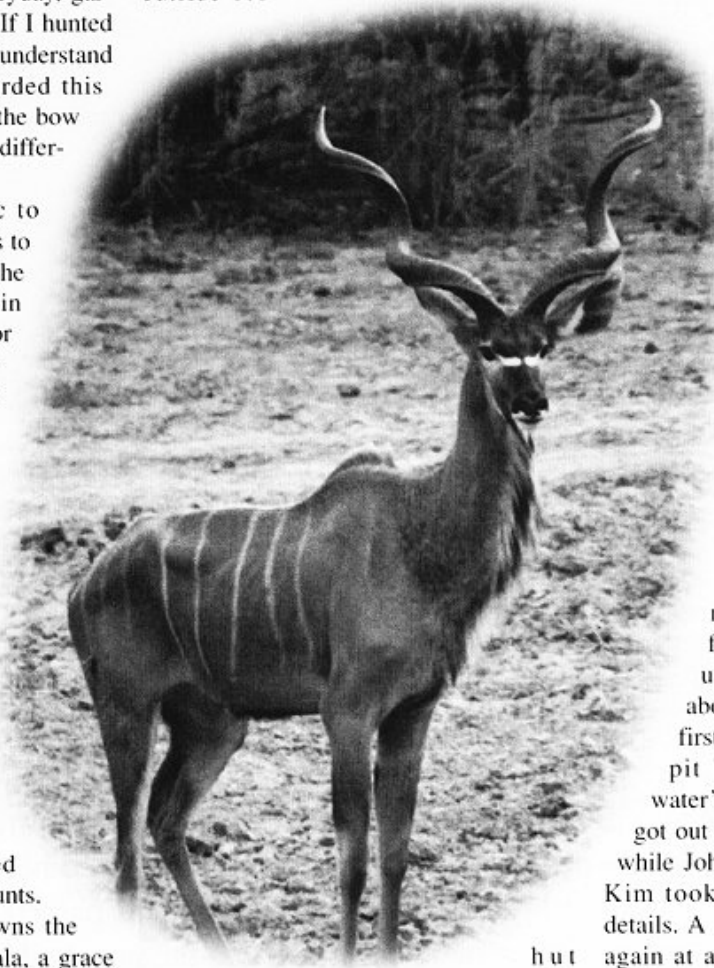
I discovered it was much the same way with my first trip to Africa. I had seen photos of African game killed with the bow and arrow and I believed it could be done; I just hadn't done it yet myself. I had yet to become a knower. So much of going to Africa, I was finding out, was like starting out all over again as a novice bowhunter. It was a strange place with strange animals and I was constantly being filled with warnings and stories of the unbelievable toughness the African game possessed. I started to lack confidence in my equipment. I needed to take my first animal, break the ice and build my confidence. I needed to become a knower.

The impala is one of the most common antelope in Africa and because of that perceived flaw, it often lacks the respect afforded to other game. It's easy to see why the dangerous game commands the hunter's reverent respect. To not do so could mean one's life. It's also easy to see why the kudu with its twin double helix of horn, or the sable, with its long twin scimitars rising out of its head, leaves you in awe. Other species are either rare and difficult to get, or like the kudu and sable, have impressive headgear, which always seems to leave the poor impala at the end of the hunter's bench. The impala is the everyday, garden variety of African game. If I hunted with a rifle, perhaps I could understand the casualness usually afforded this antelope, but my choice was the bow and arrow and I saw it with different eyes.

The kudu is magic to me, and always will be thanks to Hemingway and Ruark, but the impala held a close second in my heart long before I left for the Dark Continent, and seeing it in the wild only made me want it more. I went to Africa with two animals at the front of my mind. One was the kudu of course, but may be surprising to some, the other was the impala. I saw it as a sleek, graceful, and very worthy trophy. Some animals impress you with their size and power, others may captivate you with their beauty, and still others demand your respect because of their cunning. The impala scored high in my book on all accounts. No other animal on earth owns the balance and grace of an impala, a grace that would make the most accomplished ballerina shrink in envy. When startled, they explode with the power of a racehorse as they jump and dart to safety. With reflexes faster than the eye can see, they're able to elude well aimed arrows at point-blank range and as far as beauty, a mature ram adorns his head with a set of ringed horns reaching more than twenty inches in length, arching beauti-

fully to form the shape of a lyre. The impala was a trophy, which if I were fortunate enough to claim, would proudly be honored on my wall.

It was the start of the third day of my ten-day safari. We were moving camp closer to the river that day with the staff handling all the moving tasks, allowing the hunters to have the entire day to hunt. I was starting to get my sea legs back after the two long days of mind numbing travel it took to get here. I slept soundly, finally, after lying awake the first two nights. The first night it was the herd of kudu feeding just outside our



but that kept me from slumber. The open front allowed me to sit up in bed and watch them feed not more than 40 yards away, silhouetted in the moonlight against the lake. I watched them and another herd that came later, feeding all night on the lush grass that grew at the lake's edge. The next night it was the lion roaring close to camp and the excitement it brought—that

more than anything finally made me realize that I was really in Africa. I think a herd of elephants could have come through camp last night and I would have slept right through it. I felt fresh and in full use of my senses in the morning for the first time now and climbed into the hunting car eager with anticipation towards the day's hunt.

I wasn't sure where the professional hunter was taking me; I never was in the morning. Knowing wouldn't have mattered much anyway, every place was strange to me and I didn't know one water hole from another at this point. I was completely at the mercy of the professional, trusting him to make the best decisions for me. John and I had partnered up with Kim as our professional hunter by the third day. In the cold early dawn, the two of us climbed into the back of the open hunting car and Kim drove us off to our mystery destination. Not knowing what was ahead seemed to add to the excitement for me. It reminded me of unwrapping a package with no idea what was inside, but you knew it was going to be something good. Today I noticed we traveled on a different road from the one we used the first two days, going about 40 minutes before stopping first by a small water hole with a pit blind located close to the water's edge. Kim called for John. I got out as well and checked the setup while John got settled in the blind and Kim took care of a few last minute details. A short drive later and we were again at a small water hole with a pit blind, but this one was my pit blind.

Getting settled was quick and routine for Kim and the two black trackers. One of the trackers grabbed my bow and camera while the other took a folding chair from the back of the land rover and my lunch. There was usually very little talking; everybody knew their job well. My gear was set up in the blind

while I walked with Kim around the water hole as he offered advice on what the day might bring. The pit blind leaked a little water, having boards lain on the floor to keep your feet out of the mud, but that was the only inconvenience I noticed. The inside looked very comfortable, with ample room to stand and shoot through three small holes about chest high in the thatched walls. All in all, I felt good about my first stay in one. Kim's tracker, Sign, handed my bow down to me, with Kim placing the thatched door over the entrance, sealing me in for the next ten hours.

Pit blinds, I was told, offered the hunter the best chance for success. Your movements are completely hidden and your scent stays inside the blind with you, out of the sensitive nostrils of the game. That was the theory anyway. There was one draw back to it that I noticed right away—visibility. You couldn't see game coming from a distance like you can from an elevated blind. The young kudu bull was just suddenly there, only four yards from the blind. He entered from the rear where it was impossible for me to see, and went around to the right for a drink. There was no hole in the blind facing that way and I was alerted to his presence only by the slight sound he made drinking. I parted the thatched wall enough with my fingers to peer out and could see his gray side and nothing much else. He was close enough to stab with an arrow by hand. When he brought his head up, I saw the short stumps of horn coming out and relaxed again. A pair of warthogs were next to visit, but they were young like the kudu and short in the tusk department. Despite the fact they were also very close, I had no desire to shoot.

I had become by now a big fan of the pit blind. Within 30 minutes of arriving, I had three very wary animals closer than ten yards. There was another advantage to hunting from a hole in the ground. It was cool and comfortable in the dark cavern, something I appreciated

more as the day wore on and the temperature started to climb. I would discover later that there was one other flaw besides lack of visibility. An incident with another hunter at this very same blind three days later would forever make me a little uneasy about using

**. . . chaos broke out among the herd causing alarm snorts and rams jumping in all directions. Several began fighting, roaring, and chasing one another. . .**

them. An incident that would change the name the professional hunters used for this particular blind. It is now known as Cobra Pit.

Movement in the bush across the water hole caught my attention. Peering out one of my shooting holes with my binoculars, revealed a herd of impala rams moving towards the water hole. I had seen this routine the last two days at the other blinds I hunted. They stayed just at the edge of the cover of the brush, butting heads, chasing each other, and grunting—waiting for one to get brave enough to venture in and drink. That wouldn't happen for a while at least. Ten minutes after I first spotted them, the entire herd sprinted off with pounding hooves and alarm snorts farther into the bush and out of sight. The reason for their quick retreat was unknown to me. Maybe there was another predator in the area or maybe they just decided a quick run through the thorn-bush would feel good. I knew they would be back. Thirst doesn't go away as the sun gets higher and the day gets hotter.

Nothing showed for the next 30 minutes, which is a fair amount of time at an African water hole during the dry season. I passed the time by alternating between watching for game and watching a small lizard in the thatched roof pick-off ants that marched past it in a column. The impala rams returned at a noisy jog. This time coming out of the bush and standing in the open about 20

yards back from the water's edge, straight across from me. There were about 30 in the herd and all looked about the same size. They were facing me, which made judging their horns more difficult. I judged one as the best, but it wasn't by much and I might have been

mistaken. I tried to keep my eyes on that one ram, which was an almost impossible task as the herd kept milling around, and they looked so much alike. It really made no difference to me, as I would have happily shot any of them except the one with

the right horn broken off. Picking out one just helped me concentrate on the shot and kept me from being distracted by all the constantly moving targets. I had that problem yesterday when a another herd of skittish impala came into the water under my tree stand. They never stopped moving and kept me from picking out a single target. They ended up leaving before I could get off a shot.

The herd was obviously nervous being out in the open and close to the danger that always seems to haunt water holes. The wait was lasting more than 20 minutes and gave me time to study the herd more and prepare for the shot. Thirst finally won out and one brave ram circled around the water hole to my left and drank broadside to me from the far corner. His action started a chain reaction and the rest of the herd lined up to take their turn. All of them drank from the same spot at the water hole, about 25 yards away. I guessed my ram to be about the ninth in line, if it still was the same ram, and I readied myself for the shot. The parade was moving along slowly with the first ones to drink already moving back to the security of the bush. My ram was taking his time.

I was apprehensive about the shot. The distance was more than I wanted at 25 yards, and some of the rams when they drank would quarter slightly towards me. The first day while hunting from a tree stand, I took a shot at an impala ram from about the same dis-

tance. He was drinking with five others as I waited above, perched in a mopane tree. He was broadside and calmly drinking when I released the arrow. The shot was true, but by the time the arrow streaked across the 25 yards and reached the place he had been, there was nothing there. The entire water hole, that just a couple seconds ago held six impalas passively drinking and a couple of wart hogs too, was as empty as a ghost town. My arrow thudded harmlessly into the sun-baked clay. Experiences like that sap your confidence, and make you hesitate. I was at that place now, hesitant and apprehensive. I wished that the impalas were closer.

The decision was made. When my ram put his head down to drink, I would shoot. They weren't going to get any closer. "Pick a spot, pick a spot" kept running through my mind as the ram put his head down and I raised the bow into position and began the draw. I focused on a spot low and tight behind the front shoulder. I held about four inches lower than I normally would have aimed, going on the advice of the professional hunter. The arrow streaked out across the sun-lit space and I could see the yellow fletching lineup with the ram and then the ram was gone and I could continue to see the arrow flying away. It looked like the arrow passed through the ram, but with the impala's lightening reflexes, I wasn't sure if it had somehow again managed to dodge my arrow.

Once the shot was made, chaos broke out among the herd causing alarm snorts and rams jumping in all directions. Several began fighting, roaring, and chasing one another around. I lost sight of my ram in the fuss almost immediately. The herd quickly settled back down again and continued to stay near the water hole, but none came back close to drink. I tried to glass the herd for any sign of an injured ram. I could find none and suspected that if I did connect, the wounded impala would have left the area. I replayed the shot over a couple of times in my head. At first I was convinced that the shot connected, the arrow hitting low, about five inches back from the front leg. Later, doubt would creep in and I wasn't so sure. I needed to check the arrow to confirm the

results, but I didn't want to leave the blind with the herd still so close by. I was hoping for another shot at something, and didn't want to spook everything out of the area. I was even hoping for another shot at an impala. I was allowed five and thought two was a nice round number.

It was noon, more than two hours after the shot had been made, when I decided to crawl from the blind and have a look. I couldn't see any more sign of the impala and slowly poked my head out. Immediately I heard the bark of a kudu cow from the bush behind me and I went back into the pit blind, waiting another half an hour while I ate my lunch. I was getting anxious and ate my two sandwiches quickly, washing it down with a couple of gulps of Coke. Again I tried to emerge from the pit blind. This time I spooked a couple more kudu cows and a few impala stragglers, but continued out anyway. My arrow was easy to find as nothing sinks into the concrete hard ground and sparse vegetation. Inspection of the shaft showed a few specks of blood and the telltale

smell of bile. I knew the shot was a few inches farther back than I wanted, but it looked close enough for lungs, or liver at the very least. The professional hunters warned us to keep our shots tight to the shoulder - this wasn't the usual North American game we were shooting at. I found just one small splotch of blood on the dry ground mixed in with the thousands of tracks.

I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next. It had been three and a half hours now since the hit. I decided to wait until 3 p.m., when Kim would call for a radio check, before I called in the trackers. That would give the ram a good six hours to die and I could continue to hunt. It turned out to be a good decision. My ram only went about 250 yards before making its last bed. The horns would measure over 23 inches, which seemed to be important to the professional hunter. I just knew he was beautiful.

The ride back in the last of the day's light was a satisfied one, with the impala ram in the back of the rover. It was cooling down fast now as darkness



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started to take over and our headlights would occasionally stab an animal or two hanging along the side of the road. A short distance from the blind, a herd of impala rams leaped and raced across the road in front of us. I wondered if it was the same herd.

To some it's the lion, to others it may be the elephant or zebra, but to me the impala will always be the animal that best represents Africa. They seem so wild and free, the way I like to think about Africa.

The moonless night was African black by the time we arrived at our new camp, first stopping at the skinning shed to unload the impala. I didn't watch the process, wanting instead to remember the ram as it stood in the morning sunshine by the water's edge. I found my tent, my new home, and rummaged through one of my bags by the light of a battery-powered lantern, looking for a special bottle of German beer. I had brought the bottle with me for just this special occasion. Others were arriv-

ing back from the hunt and went looking for their new tents to start the unpacking from the move. I delayed the need to unpack for a few minutes and took my bottle of warm German beer to the mess hut. There I sank deep into a well-cushioned wicker chair, feeling the last of the day's adrenaline drain out. I was alone for the moment and opened the beer. Remembering Hemingway's book: *Green Hills of Africa*, and a promise to a friend; I held the bottle in the air and toasted Hemingway, who wrote so beautifully of Africa that I had fallen in love with her long before I had ever seen her. Then I drank hard; not to quench any thirst, but to drink in a moment I never wanted to forget.

It has been almost 30 years now since I shot that first doe with a bow and arrow, yet I can remember every detail of that day. I remember how the blue sky looked above the canopy of yellow quaking aspen leaves. I can replay in my mind each step the doe took as it slowly fed towards me. I can even remember what I

was wearing from my high-top Converse All Star sneakers to the hand-me-down, patched, camoed jacket (world War II vintage) that would take me another three years to grow into. There have been some 30 odd deer and a few other assorted big game animals since that first doe, and I would be hard pressed to remember much detail about most of them, but you remember everything about that first one.

The impala was my first African game, fulfilling a life-long dream. I would bet my favorite custom bow that if God kept me on this earth another thirty years, I would still be able to tell you exactly what color blue the African sky was that day and how the trees and the impala rams looked reflecting off the water hole. I would be able to describe the safari clothes I was wearing right down to the sweat stains on my old felt hat, and I could probably give you a complete play-by-play account of the ram's slow approach into range. You never forget when you become a knower.



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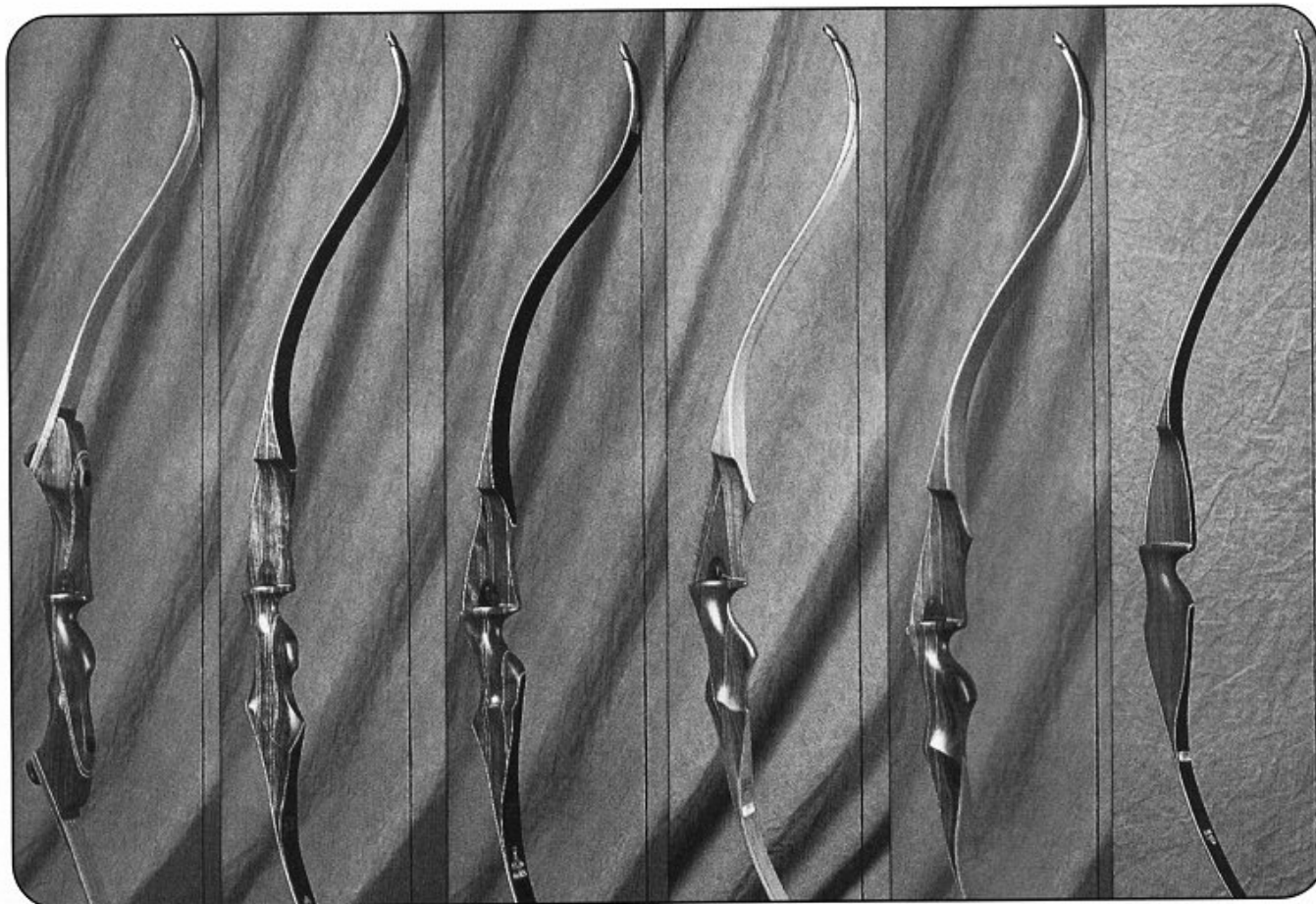
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## ***CHOOSING A NEW TRADITIONAL BOW***

by David Mitchell

**I** readily confess to being a bow-aholic. I seldom meet a traditional style bow that I do not like. Often it is love at first sight. Over the course of several years I have owned any number of bows, both production and custom models. I have the pleasure of counting some custom bowyers among my personal friends, and as a result I have gathered a good bit of information which may be of help to anyone who is considering the purchase of a new bow, especially if it will be a custom-made bow which will call for the outlay of a fairly significant investment.

If you are new to traditional archery, the choices can be overwhelming. In truth, they have never been richer or more exciting. But before you order, some fundamental things should be considered which may help you limit your search more quickly and guide you to that truly one-of-a-kind bow you seek. But here is a personal word of warning; rest assured that these fine bowyers will keep coming back year after year with even better things that will make it mighty hard to stay with just one!

If you are just starting to get into the traditional mode, it is wise to experiment for a while with used or production bows before investing in a made-to-order custom bow. The gorgeous choices available make it hard to wait, but

until you are sure of what you want, it will be best. By shooting a user or production bow for a while, you will establish a preferred shooting style and draw length, and will learn what weight bow you can handle well. More bows are sent back to bowyers to have a little weight taken off than for any other reason.

When the time seems right to select a new bow, try as many as you can. The best place to do this is at a traditional shoot where you can meet and personally talk to various bow makers and try their wares which, of course, they are glad to let you do. There is no obligation in trying them out. With the proliferation of traditional shoots, few of us are more than a few hours drive away and it can be the best decision you make. They are great fun, plus you can see what you hope to buy, perhaps even pick up a new bow at the shoot if someone has what you want on display.

When examining a bowyer's work there are several things I look for. Overall fit and finish should be superb. Look for lamination glue lines that are tight, and make sure the riser feathers smoothly into the limb without any gaps. You should see no file marks or sanding marks and no sags or runs in the finish. Top quality finishes are a good sign that the same care has gone into the construction of the bow. I like to see string

nocks that are well finished and symmetrical. Well-formed nocks are indicative of good workmanship. On recurves, the limbs should not be twisted and the string should track straight down the middle of the limb over the recurve.

Custom bows cost more, but for good reasons. The custom fit, quality finish, and additional labor-intensive work required to do multiple laminations and overlays are part of that cost, but the more exotic materials used in many custom bows also add to the price. If a bow is highly advertised with expensive color ads, that cost must be factored in as well. To say that "you get what you pay for" is true to an extent.

Be aware that there are finely made, great-shooting bows being made that may cost less than others because the bowyer is newer on the market or not so well known. Some real buys can await the purchaser who patiently looks with a critical eye. Some of my finest bows were found in just this way.

Performance will generally not be a big factor in price. A given bow maker will usually produce bows in various price ranges. They all will come off the same forms and have the same workmanship, but the less expensive bows may simply have less exotic woods and fewer inlays and overlays. For a hunting bow you may not need or want those. Don't be afraid to ask a bowyer if there is something he can do to save you some money if price is a serious consideration, but you like a particular bow. Most bowyers will be happy to try to work with you.

Next you will need to decide—recurve or longbow? That is a highly personal decision. I do not personally believe one is inherently easier to shoot than the other. That varies from person to person. I find longbows as easy to shoot as I do recurves (or at least as well as I am able to shoot). Longbows are known for hand shock, but the best built ones have little or none at all. It does not seem to be related to handle weight or material

as much as it is to care and accuracy in tillering. If limbs recover to brace height in proper relationship when shot, hand shock will not be a problem.

Now there is a third style of bow on the market that is often referred to as a hybrid longbow. These bows are designed to be shorter (60 to 64 inches) and have wider limbs than conventional longbows. They have a handle somewhere between a recurve and a conventional longbow and shoot as sweet as anything I have tried. To me they have all the advantages of both bow styles without any disadvantages. If you can't decide between a longbow or recurve, try one or two of these at your next shoot. I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how nice they shoot.

You will need to choose a bow length for your new bow. This can vary depending on the bow's design. There are no hard and fast rules. Longer draw lengths call for longer bows, but trust your bowyer. A bow may be shorter than you think you need, but it may have a

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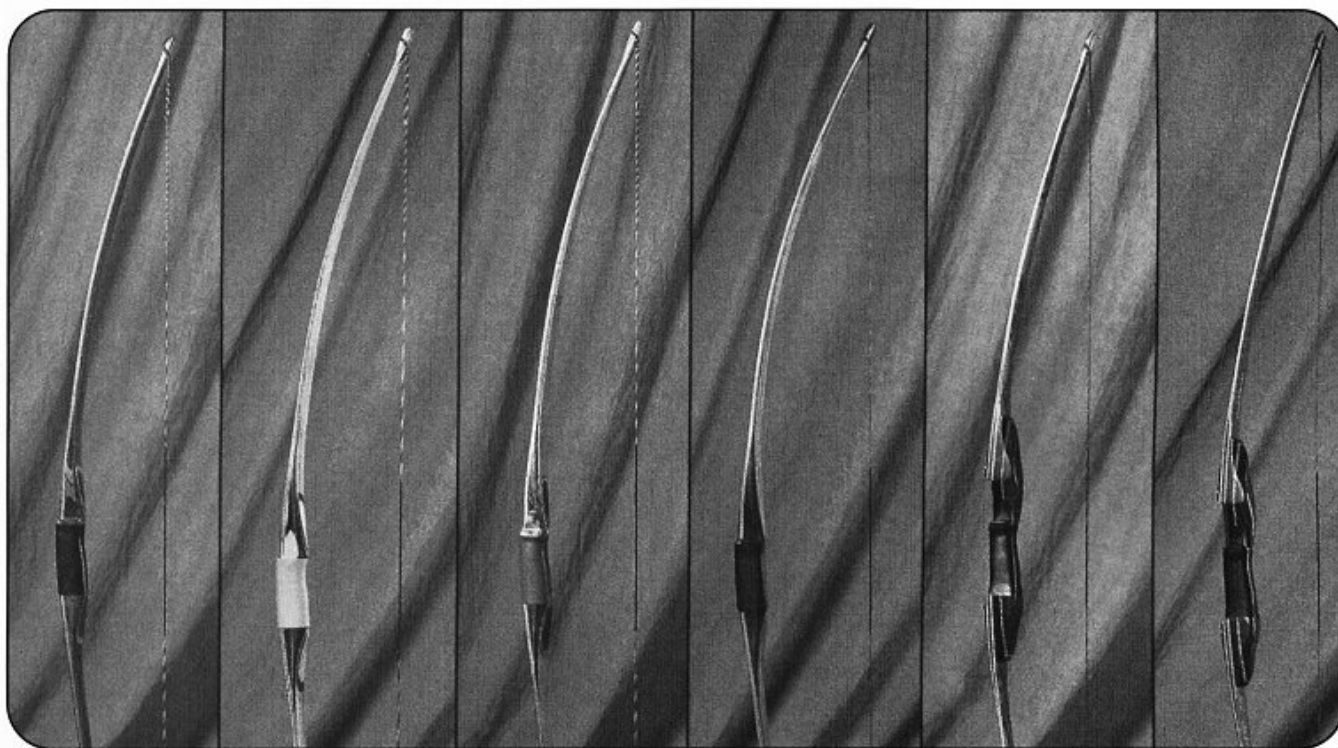
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short riser and long working limbs. That often allows for a shorter bow by a couple of inches that does not sacrifice smoothness. The bowyer is the best source of advice I have found when it comes to his bows.

Of greater importance is the selection of draw length and draw weight. A custom bow should be made to draw and shoot smoothly at your draw—that is your actual shooting draw length. All of us will tend to draw longer when being measured than we actually draw while shooting. Have a friend observe while you shoot several arrows to get a better idea of your draw length.

Your bow weight should be chosen carefully. Do not get a bow heavier than you can shoot comfortably. If it is to be a hunting bow, get a weight you can still manage well after sitting humped up in a stand on a freezing day for two or three hours. We often fool ourselves on how much weight it takes to dispatch game. Before compounds, a bow of 50 or 55 pounds was considered heavy, and you will notice lots of older bows from the 60s and early 70s were in the 42-45 pound range. Now we are convinced that 50 pounds is light.

Don't forget, the number one reason bow makers are asked to take bows back is because the buyer got one that was too heavy. Here is an important factor to remember, the length of your power stroke is as important as draw weight, and I personally believe it is more important. By selecting a weight that you can draw to a good full length, you will gain better performance than shooting a heavier bow at a shorter draw caused by scrunched up shoulders. Check this out, you'll see it is true.

If you are accustomed to a compound, expect your draw length to shorten at least an inch or two, and be willing to drop down at least ten to 15 pounds from the peak weight you have been shooting. Trust me on this.

When everything else has been decided, the bowyer will ask what may be the hardest question of all, "What woods do you want in the riser and limbs?" The choices are limitless it seems. All have their proponents, but in truth, little will be gained in one wood over another. Performance of modern laminated bows is largely determined by design and fiber glass. Don't agonize over this, get what appeals to you.

You will find that the bow makers you will meet are fine people to deal with. They will do all they can to build you that very special bow. They want you to be happy and earn your repeat business, and you will repeat if you are like me! But please realize that they have a basic design which their bows follow which is dictated by the forms they use. They can customize your grip size and shape to a degree, but the essential lines of their bow are given. Be discerning but not petty. Most will bend over backwards to give you what you want.

When you order, be patient—that is the hardest part. Please don't call the bowyer every day to check on your bow or change it one pound in draw weight. He can't work while he's talking on the phone. Believe it or not, the day will finally come when that big, brown UPS truck shows up and you take delivery of that special bow. Then you can begin deciding which one you want next!



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**THREE RIVERS ARCHERY**

# LINDA LOVES CHOCOLATE

BY  
BEN GRAHAM



**A**s I sat perched in a pine tree overlooking Churchill Lake in northwest Saskatchewan, I was trying to make a decision whether or not to shoot the two-hundred-plus pound black bear feeding contentedly just eight yards from me. Despite the stories I had been told by the guide, Kelly Hanson, of numerous Pope and Young bear hav-

ing been seen and taken from the area, this was the first bear I had seen in five days.

To further complicate matters, Kelly had imposed a \$500 fine for shooting sows and I was having difficulty trying to determine whether this was a sow or boar. About this time I noticed another bear coming up the shore line. "This one

should be a shooter?" I thought as I stood up and readied my new 54-pound take-down long bow. As the second bear approached the bait it made a rushing charge, slapping brush and standing on its hind feet, huffing and growling. The aggressive bluff worked and sent bear number one running for cover. As the new bear strolled in and took over the bait, I realized it was the same 150-pound sow that Linda had been sitting here watching for four days. I finally talked Kelly into moving her several miles up the lake where a couple of nice boars had been seen.

Now it seems that bear number one had not had enough to eat so it slowly made its way back over to the bait. He was greeted with aggressive snarls but his persistence finally paid off and the little sow simmered down. I began to take snap shots of the two feeding together for Linda. I had told her that I was going over to her stand and shoot a bear, and I did.

After the bait was all cleaned up the larger one walked over to my tree and looked right up at me. This could really get exciting now," I thought. Naw, he was just curious as to what was making those funny noises up in that tree. "Not a bad idea" I thought, "maybe I should take him." I only had one more day to hunt. I really suspected that he was a boar when he got frisky with the little sow like he wanted to mount her. But she was being the typical obstinate female, so he left, and naturally she followed him up the lake shore. I could see them making up as they disappeared into the Canadian bush, eh. I kicked myself during the boat ride back to the tent for passing up what might have been my only opportunity to take a bear on this hunt.

Now that I have your attention, let me get to the heart of this article, which is the hunting career of a lady with a bow. More and more ladies are taking up a bow and following their husband or boyfriends to the bush and enjoying the outdoor experience. Still, it is not a common sight to find a camo-clad female bowhunter. In all of our bowhunting camps, we have yet to find one. I would think, therefore, that this would be of interest to many.

Linda gets along very well with her male counterparts and more than carries her own weight in camp, literally and figuratively. She has learned that mother nature can be unpredictable, and she goes prepared. I have seen her spend five hours in a treestand in a Wisconsin Blizzard and climb the 13,000 foot Colorado mountains all day with a full day pack.

In 1995, *Traditional Bowhunter Magazine* published the article entitled, "Lady with a Recurve." This was the story of her first big game harvest, a bull elk. This was not a guided hunt—she and I were on our own in public land in Colorado. I called the bull in and she did the shooting. It took us three years hunting that area to make a plan come together. Since then we have hunted elk, bear, deer, caribou, nilgai, antelope, and wild hogs, both guided and unguided, in many states and provinces. Although I have been fortunate enough on several of these hunts to make a harvest, opportunities were very scarce for her. Anyone who has ever taken big game animals with a bow and arrow knows what a rewarding feeling that is.

He also knows that more often than not, the plan never comes together, either you fail to locate the game, or the shot never presents itself or (as much as we hate to admit it) we miss! Bowhunters and more specifically, traditional bowhunters, are a unique lot. They have accepted a challenge, knowing that success does not accompany every trip to the field—that is, if you equate success with a kill. They also know that the greater the challenge, the greater the reward. After taking four whitetails with a gun, I lost interest in gun hunting. There was neither the challenge nor the reward that I sought in a hunting experience. I hear this often from guys converting to traditional archery equipment.

The next

five years of hunting was a learning experience. The first bear and elk that I harvested were taken with a compound, and it was exciting, but I will never forget the first bear and elk that I took with a recurve! Man, I could walk on air!

Well, according to Linda, it took seven years and 15 minutes to make her next big game harvest, which was an eight point, Ohio whitetail. After seven years of bowhunting whitetails in three states, it all came together in 15 minutes of the first day we hunted in 1997. An 18-yard running shot put the buck down within sight of her stand. It has been said that success comes when preparation meets opportunity. Linda and I constantly practice running shots and feel very confident in taking them when necessary.

In May of 1998, preparation met opportunity again when the bear guide moved Linda to a new location. After just a couple of hours in the stand, a 304-pound chocolate boar strolled in like he owned the place and bellied up to the bar. "Pick a spot," she reminded herself, and turned the 52 pound Hummingbird longbow loose. Seconds later the big chocolate lay still, just 35 yards away with a Magnus in his heart. The skull should measure close to 19" Pope and Young. With a distinct white V on his chest he will make a beautiful full mount for a life time of fond memories. We are often asked, mostly by non-hunters, if we eat bear meat. We do not kill what we do not eat! If we ever kill a



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mountain lion or wolf, however, we may make an exception! Actually, bear is our favorite meat.

The last day of my hunt was a mixture of good luck and bad luck. As we headed out across the lake I realized that I had forgotten the tripod head to mount my video camera to my treestand. This enables me to video and shoot at the same time, especially on a bear bait when you know where the action is going to take place and you can preset the camera for it. This set up enabled me to get a nice shot on video on a beach in Quebec in 1994. Of course, if it is not a good shot, you can always edit the video, eh.

When we approached my treestand, I found pieces of the seat in the tree and on the ground. For some reason, bears just love to chew on seats, whether treestands, four wheelers, or ski mobiles.

The boat had barely gotten out of sight when the show began. The regular little sow came in to the fresh food like she had been called by a diner bell. I videoed her for about 15 minutes then shut the camera off to save the battery, hoping to get a shot on film, after the small sow got her piece, she walked about 25 yards down the shoreline, up the bank and lay down in the brush within sight. I suppose she's guarding "her" bait. A few minutes later however, she stood up erect, looking into the bush and then came tearing past me at full speed. Now, I thought, whatever set this spunky, sassy little bear running for cover must be pretty bad.

I had managed to find a limb in the big pine with a fork facing the bait at just the right angle to tie my camera into so that I could video the bait while I shot. I slowly stood up and readied my bow. As bear number two approached the bait I could tell it was not the trophy I had hoped for nor was it the boar from the day before, for that matter. Around two hundred pounds I guessed.

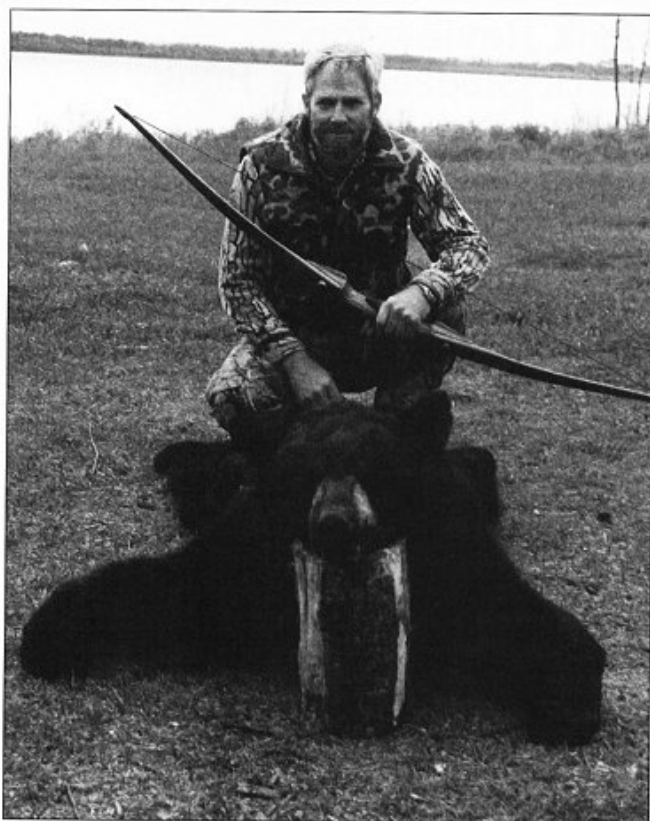
When we first arrived at camp Mr. Hanson asked me just what size of bear I was looking for. "300 plus pounds," I replied. Anything over 250 pounds in Saskatchewan will make Pope and Young. "No problem," he assured me. Well, this was the last of our six-day hunt and I knew it was this bear or noth-

ing. My two primary objectives for this hunt were to video another shot and take my first big game with a longbow, and the camera was rolling. Hey, ya can't eat Pope and Youngs anyway.

The bear, knowing I was in the tree, came in facing me and was reluctant to turn in any other position. I knew that eventually the log that I had placed across one end of the fish barrel would force the bear to move around to a broadside position, which eventually is just what happened. I have learned not to rush the shot on a baited bear, espe-

cially if it is an older bear. They are wise to baits and know they are hunted and will walk in and out checking the area out for human presence. The inexperienced hunter will make a move to shoot the bear as soon as he starts in and the older bears will pick him out and that will be the last you see of him.

As the razor sharp two blade broadhead passed through the bear's lungs, it wheeled and made a hasty retreat back the way it came. I reached over for the video camera and realized that it had shut off. I managed to get it



The last day of my hunt was a mixture of good luck and bad luck.

back on just in time to record the bear's death moans. He had piled up in exactly the same spot the smaller bear had bedded.

Well, I had some good video footage, some delicious meat, and my first longbow harvest. Linda had even more delicious meat, her first longbow harvest, a color phase black bear, and her first Pope and Young animal. Not bad eh!



## AUTUMN LEAVES, a Bowhunter's Life

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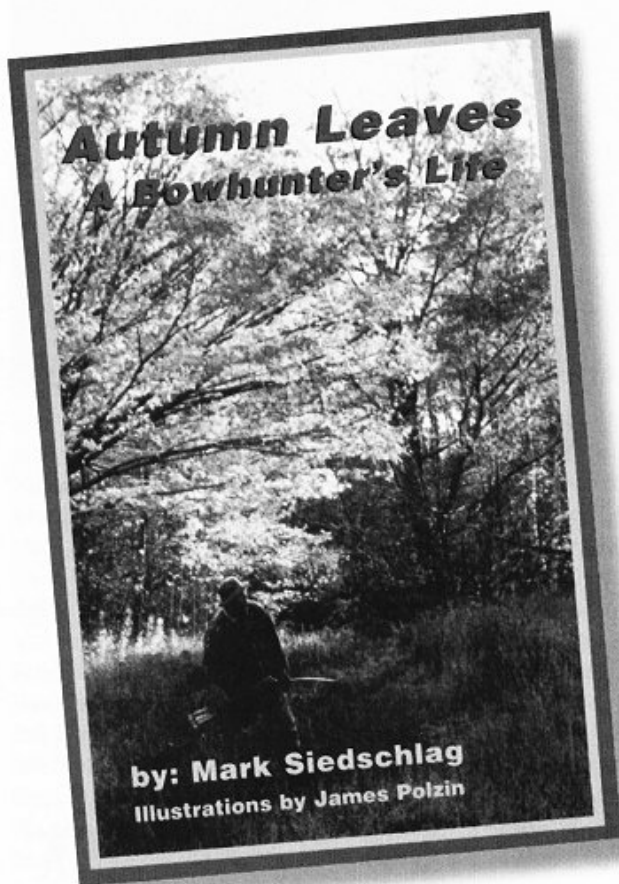
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## Book Review for Mark Siedschlag's Book:

# Autumn Leaves

Reviewed By:  
Daniel and Rebecca Koltz



You can almost hear the crunch of dried leaves under your feet, feel the last warmth of Indian Summer sun on your face, and smell the leaves as they lay on the ground beneath their summer home, when you read *Autumn Leaves*.

This book is so much more than a book about hunting, it is a book about relationships. A man's relationship with his father, the one who taught him so much about the hunting experience, the one who started him on a lifelong hunting adventure. The man who taught him about sacrifice as he sacrificed to buy that first bow for his son. The bow that started it all, one of the "girls he loved." In *To All the Girls I've Loved*, Mark explains the affection he has for his bow. Maybe not all hunters have the same affection for their bows, but let's be honest, a man cannot have too many bows. All hunters can

find a similar appreciation for their own bows when reading this story.

The book is also about Mark's relationships with those who have been his friends and hunting partners through years and their many experiences together which have shaped his hunting history. You will read in *The Arrow Tree* about the special moments that Mark had in the woods of Wisconsin. While reading this story you will picture yourself remembering the experiences that you may have had in your own special hunting area. In *The Arrow Tree*, Mark remembers the many years that he hunted and hiked in his woods, but it is also about passing on traditions to friends. I happened to be the fortunate friend that Mark shared "his" woods with that weekend. I was the one who shared in a moment of silence that warm, August day. With the release of a handcrafted birch arrow into a twenty-foot white pine, Mark's woods became mine. I knew I would never hunt alone, as long as that arrow remained in the white pine it made its home in. *The Arrow Tree* is one of many stories in *Autumn Leaves* that characterizes a hunter's relationship with the quiet, solitude of the woods and those who inhabit it.

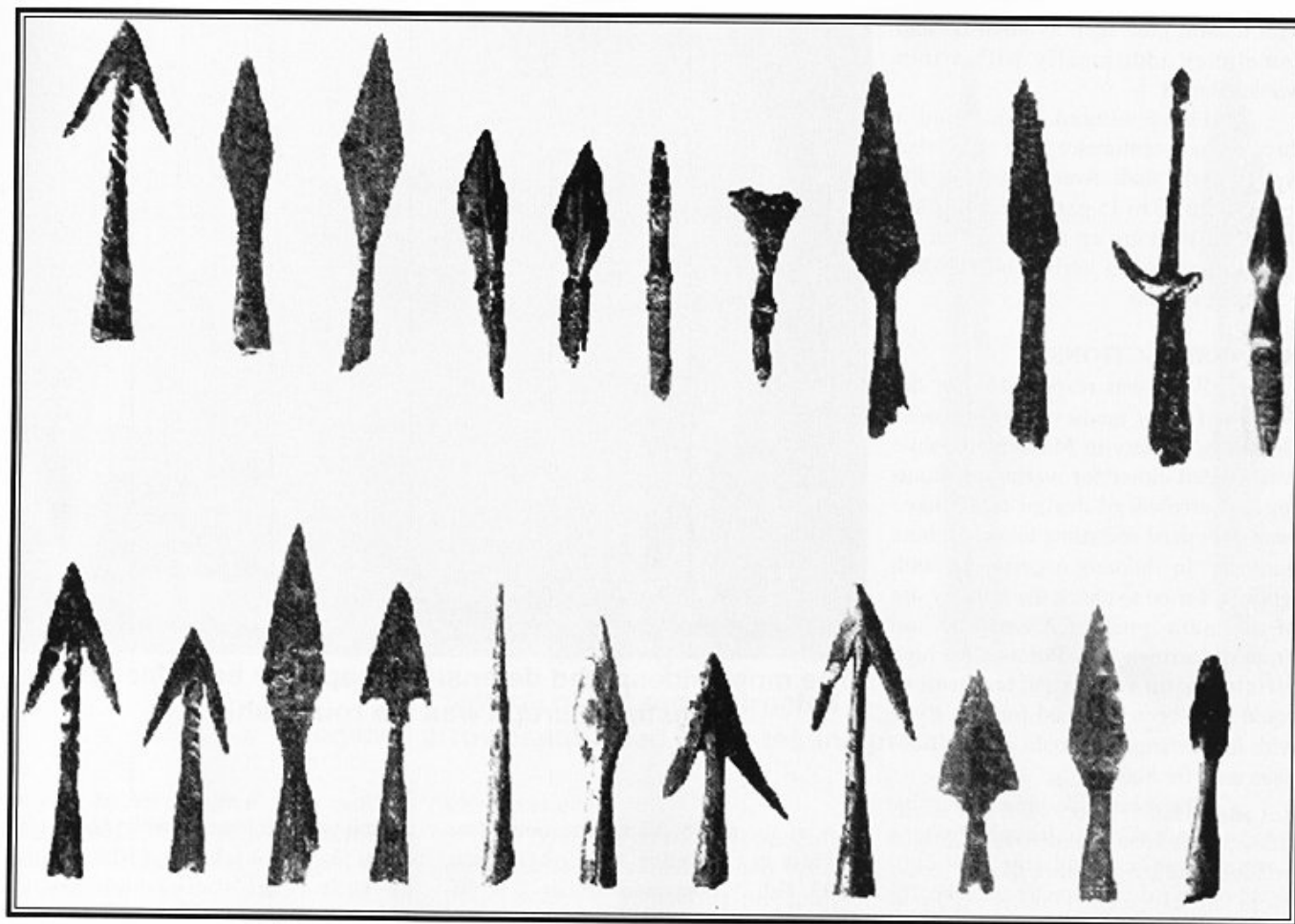
In some ways *Autumn Leaves* reminds you of simpler times, "Shooting just for the wonderment of watching the arrow fly." This sentiment is from Mark's story, *The Debt*. Mark is a firm believer in passing the tradition of bowhunting and archery on to the upcoming generation of bowhunters. I've witnessed Mark on several occasions put down his bow to help a younger person become more skilled at shooting a bow, much like the boy in *The Debt*. The story reminds us to look beyond our own experiences and focus on ways we as hunters, can pass on our skills to an upcoming generation of hunters.

If it's hunting stories you want, *Autumn Leaves* has those as well. Mark narrates his hunting adventures in Wisconsin, Arkansas, Colorado, and New Mexico. The highlight of the book in terms of hunting experiences would have to be the story *Running with the Bulls*. Mark attained his dream of hunting elk when he moved to New Mexico. In this story he takes the reader with him during his first season as he runs nightly with the bulls into his second season where each night is spent in eager anticipation of the perfect opportunity. It was during this season that Mark captured a lifelong memory—"It was an impressive sight to watch that huge rack bob up and down above the oakbrush as the bull marched towards me..." You will have to read *Running with the Bulls* to find out if Mark got that "perfect opportunity."

The tales that Mark Siedschlag tells will make you laugh one moment and touch your heart the next. His tales will renew your spirit as a hunter. Life is filled with moments like these, and Mark's book reminds us that it's the moments, the relationships, and the experiences that are really the fabric of hunting. Mark touches on the traditional archer's longing for more than just the hunt or the kill, he captures this in each chapter of his book. The stories about his hunting experiences will pull you into his life as a bowhunter where he learned to appreciate each and every moment of nature.



To get your copy of *Autumn Leaves*, contact your favorite traditional archery supplier, or Adventure Trail Publishing, (505) 862-7440.



# Shooting Experiments With Early-Medieval Arrowheads

By Holger Riesch

**I**n the Merovingian era (5th-7th century AD) a lot of variously shaped arrowheads were used by the Franks, Alemannians, and Bavarians that dwelled in today's Germany and France. Two-winged points with rhombic, willow-leaf, or triangular blades represented the standard Germanic arrowhead type. Less numerous four-sided bodkin or needle-shaped points are today found in warrior graves. Finally, we have three-winged arrowheads, but they belong to a type that rarely occurs in Central Europe. They were adopted from the Mediterranean area where this design (originally invented by Asiatic steppe nomads like the Scythians) was used since ancient Greek and Roman times. Other types like transverse or trident-shaped arrowheads do not have relevant frequency.

The average two-winged arrowhead is between seven and 11 centimeters long. Its blade is between one to two-and-a-half centimeters wide and one to two millimeters thick.

The length of the cutting edges varies from two centimeters up to more than five centimeters. Barbed arrowheads usually are three to four centimeters wide and have four to five centimeter long cutting edges.

The front part of bodkins can be up to four centimeters long with maximum three to four millimeter thick edges. All these types have sockets of about nine millimeters in diameter to integrate the shafts, which were made of hazel, birch, or wayfaring tree wood. Shaft and socket were fixed

with natural glue such as birch tar and sometimes additionally with a thin woolen thread.

Three-winged points had a three to four centimeter long thorn that was set in the shaft. Average weights differ between 10 to 15 grams of small flat-points or bodkins up to more than 20 grams of massive, barbed broadheads with long sockets.

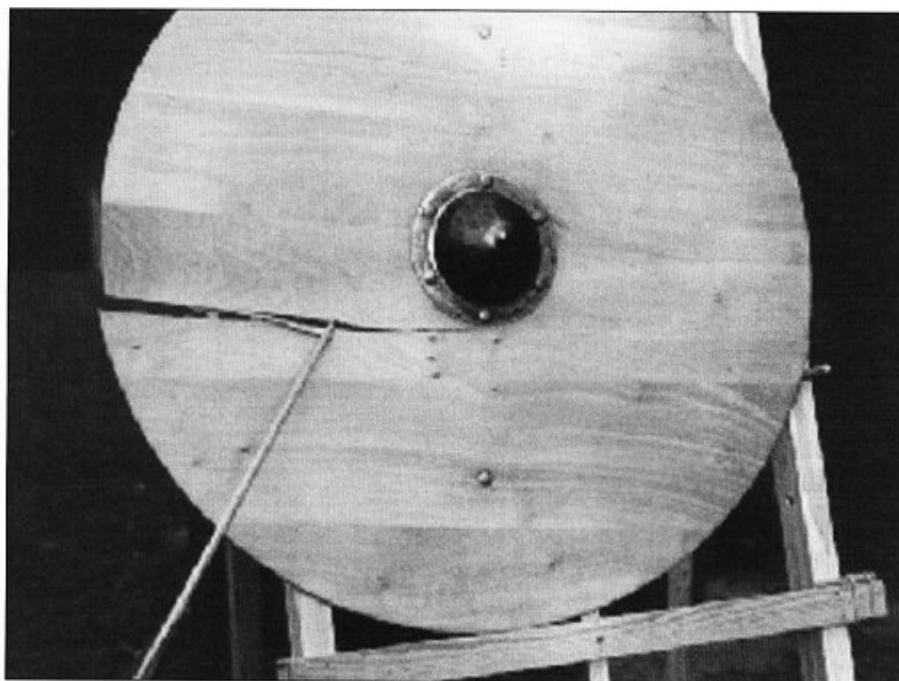
## RECONSTRUCTIONS

What was responsible for the variety of early medieval arrowheads? Generally, archery in Merovingian time was needed either for warfare or hunting. So arrowhead design could have been optimized according to one of these purposes. In shooting experiments with replicas, I tried to check the military use of the main types of Alemannic and Frankish arrowheads. Points with high efficiency on reconstructed armour could have been designed for war, those with low efficiency should mainly have been used for hunting.

The most widespread defensive weapon in early medieval Western Europe was the round shield. It consisted of six to 12 millimeter thick boards made of lime, elder, or poplar wood and had diameters between 60 and 100 centimeters. In the center, a metal shield-boss was placed to protect the grip that was integrated in an iron brace expanding over the shield's back.

Until recently, archeological research could not determine whether Merovingian shields always were given a leather (or rawhide?) covering or if in some cases the boards were left unprotected. For the shooting experiments we made two plain 90-centimeter target-shields of nine-millimeter-thick lime wood. Only one of them was covered with three millimeter roughly tanned cow leather on the front side. This was pulled over the periphery of the wooden-disk and fixed there with little nails.

The reconstructed, hand-forged arrowheads were made of unalloyed steel and had a hard-



**The most widespread defensive weapon in early Medieval Western Europe was the round shield.**

ness of about 185 Vickers hardness (see replicas in Instinctive Archer Magazine, 1997, Fall, "Alemannic Archery," p. 60-62).

Before re-forging, we had analyzed the metallurgy of an Alemannic original. This flat-point possessed an interesting three layer structure built of two different sorts of steel. The core part consisted of mostly ferritic iron (around 180 HV). On the outside there were two lightly harder layers of ferritic/perlitic iron (around 190 HV).

Such a "modern" structural constitution made the projectile more unsusceptible to brittle fracture when hitting massive targets. The softer layer was able

to stop crack expansion while the harder outer layers stabilized the blade. Because of the similar hardness we expected the re-forged points to show

authentic performance like the original.

## SHOOTING EXPERIMENTS

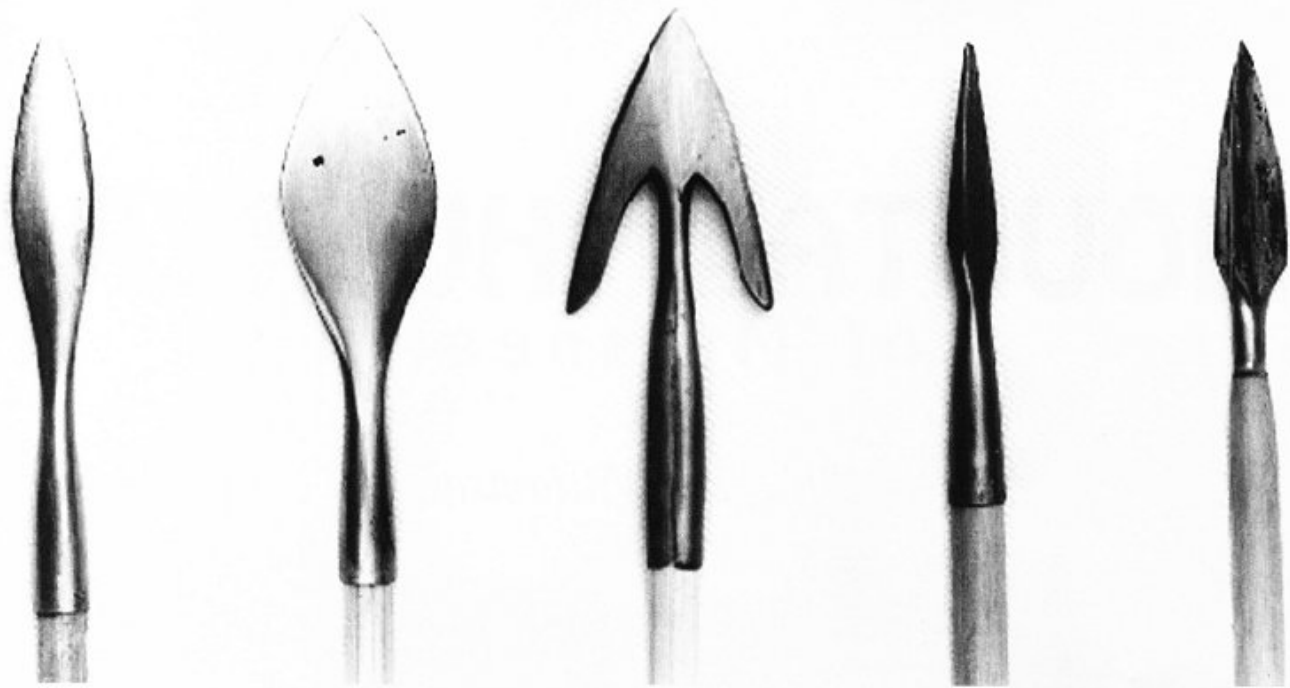
A modern longbow made of fiber-reinforced cherry wood and pine shafts were used in the shooting experiments. The bow had a 72 pound draw weight and accelerated the 40 to 47 gram arrows to a speed of 49 meters per second, measured 50 centimeters after arrow release.

The shooting distance at the shields was 15 meters. A first series

of arrows was shot at the leather covered shield. None of the small flat-points



**In a combat situation, a shield like this would have provided enough protection against two or three bow-shots**



**Several of the reconstructed  
Medieval arrowheads used in the testing process.**

pierced farther than five or six centimeters through. Generally, the increasing diameter of the socket prevented better penetration. For the same reason, the bodkin had no relevant higher efficiency.

The penetration of the two-winged tips orientated on the grain direction of the lime-wood. Eight of ten hits stuck more or less parallel towards the grain (the more divergent the angle, the more penetration decreased.)

The heavy barbed broadheads had 75% efficiency compared to the small flat-points for the wide blade.

Cleaving damaged the shield to a similar extent no matter what type of the arrowhead hit (15 to 30 centimeters). The leather covering however held the construction stable. In spite of this, the piece without covering broke in two halves when hit by a bodkin and a barbed broadhead. The arrows went ten to 11 centimeters through.

In a combat situation, a shield like this would have provided enough protection against two or three bowshots, but afterwards had very few practical uses. Further hits by missile weapons and even blows by sword or ax would cause it to totally collapse.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The design of early-medieval arrowheads was suited to their special purpose as war or hunting projectiles. Small flat-points and bodkins were weapons of war. They showed highest efficiency of all tested points in shooting experiments on a reconstructed shield made of wood and leather. Remarkably the bodkins did not penetrate much better than the flat-points, therefore their original function should have been to pierce metal armour.

Considering the fact that in Merovingian society, expensive chain or lamella armour could be afforded only by a wealthy minority, here is perhaps a reason why bodkins were not as frequently used as the two-winged points. Arrowheads with blades wider than about three centimeters probably were purely hunting weapons.

Late medieval written sources emphasize wide barbed arrowheads as ideal hunting projectiles for shooting red deer that were also preferred in Merovingian time hunting. The penetration power of three-winged arrowheads on a massive target was disappointing. We know however by archeological evi-

dence that it is often a characteristic feature of Merovingian sites that contain three-winged points to include bodkins as well. Remembering the results of the shooting experiments, this might indicate an alternative use of arrowheads with different penetration power by the archers depending on whether massive or soft targets should be hit.

Finally, experimental archeology showed that for use in warfare, a round-shield made of wooden boards should have had a leather covering to provide sufficient protective power.

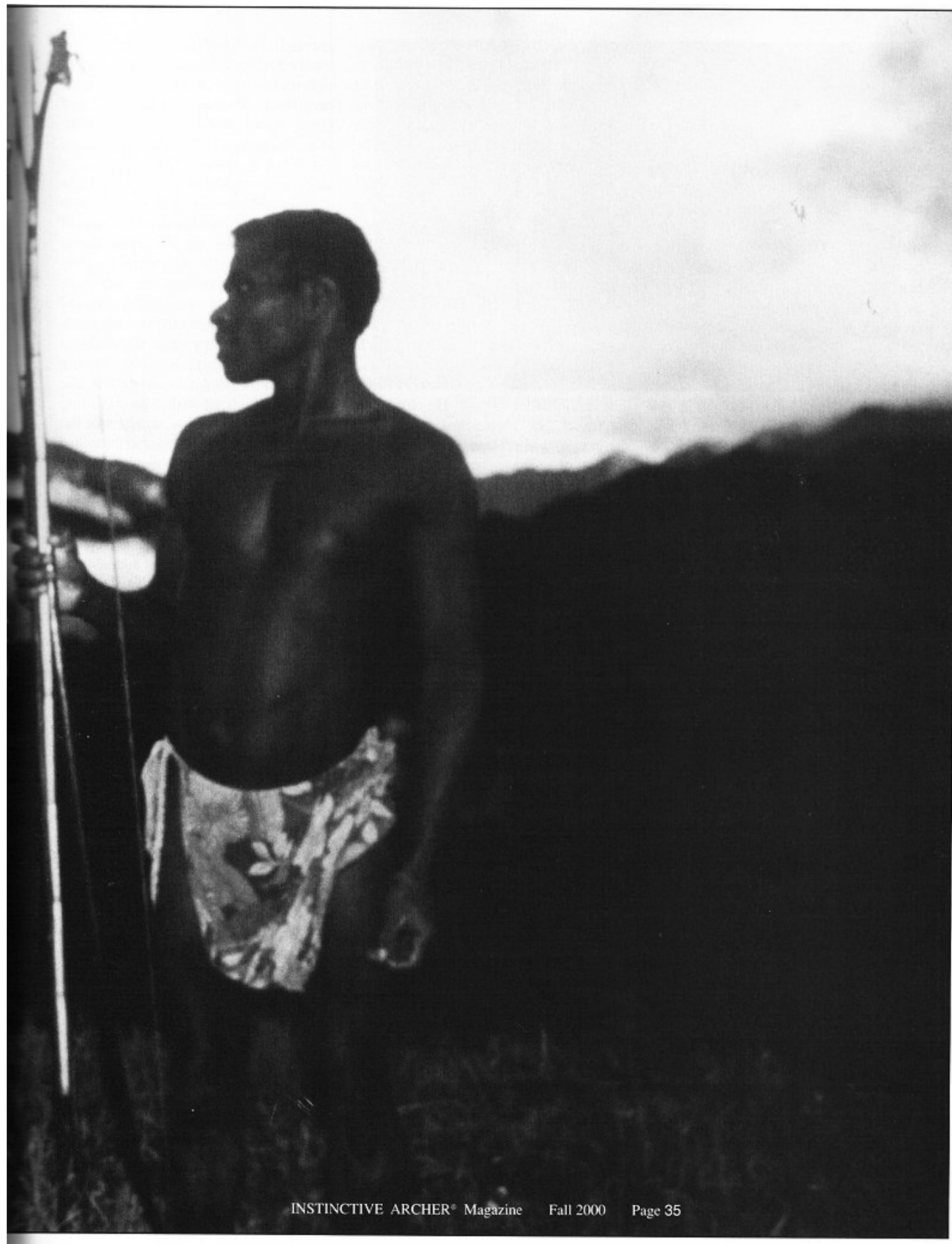


*This is a summary of two articles by the author originally published in "Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt", Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum-Mayence (Germany), vol. 28, 1997, 2 and vol. 30, 1999, 3.*

# MOUNTAIN HUNTERS

of Melanesia

*By Rick Williamson*



The putrid smell of rotting flesh assaulted my senses as Ravae wiped the blade of my pig-hunting knife clean on his grime covered loincloth. With the skill of a surgeon he pushed its razor sharp edge through the vile smelling wound and sliced away the top of his badly infected finger. As I lifted the coconut shell away from the embers with bamboo tongs, coconut oil which boiled inside spat onto the back of my hand. The string of profanity I muttered as the oil instantly raised a red welt spread a smile across Ravae's pained features. He dipped a piece of fibrous coconut husk into the smoking oil and dripped it onto his open wound. His head swung from side to side and he grit his teeth as a wave of excruciating pain racked his body. Several times he endured the agony of the searing oil until the steaming fluid completely covered his wound. Despite the intense pain, he never complained throughout the whole of his primitive surgery.

Ordinarily he would've used a bamboo knife to cut away the evil spirits he believed were responsible for his infection. But so impressed was Ravae with the sharpness of my knife he decided it would instil fear into the sickness-causing demons when they felt its keen edge. I was glad when Voemanu straddled him as he laid back on the mud floor. She drew up large globules of phlegm and spat onto his stomach. Looking to the heavens she quietly sang to Melerapa, the custom god, and massaged the spittle into her husband's torso. She then viscously drove her thumb deep into Ravae's belly button and tied sacred vines around his finger and arm to ward off the demons who had inflicted his illness. This culminated the healing ritual and meant Ravae wouldn't make a series of cuts on his stomach to bleed out evil spirits. Ravae quaffed down a coconut shell of freshly chewed kava root. As the brew's mind numbing, analgesic effect surged through his system, he stretched out onto his woven sleeping mat on the mud floor and fell into a deep sleep.

Espiritu Santo is an untouched jewel of the pacific. At four thousand and ten square kilometers in size and

boasting four of Vanuatu's highest peaks, its rarely visited central highlands are dotted with ridge-top hamlets. Home to peoples who due to their geographical isolation have remained quarantined from the onslaught of the 21st Century. The world which lies beyond the mountainous valleys is unfamiliar and of no consequence to some of the island's primitive inhabitants.

Over a year had passed since I'd last walked across the islands rugged mountainous spine and made contact with this remote clan. Being totally at ease with their primeval ways led to a strange turn of events. Age old beliefs had dictated over logic. The chief was convinced I was the reincarnation of his dead grandfather's spirit. He christened me Tavua ("Ta" means man, "Vua" from the jungle) and offered me a full initiation into the tribe. After taking a gigantic leap across a colossal cultural divide I'd become a fully fledged member of the tribe by enduring a ritual and finally killing a wild pig with a spear to show I had courage and could provide for the village. This small remote hamlet felt far from that, as it was now my second home.

Rumour and bizarre stories about a legendary pygmy tribe had been fed to me in the coastal villages during my first trek across the rugged island and fuelled my desire to see if any truth lay behind the myth. I was told to look for a sacred tree which held a conch shell. If I was lucky, after giving a couple of blasts on the shell the pygmies would emerge from the rainforest to greet me. Others talked of three-foot-high men who resembled devils with pointed teeth, hair to their ankles, and long flowing beards. Feral ferocious creatures who ran around naked with a voracious appetite for human flesh.

When I'd returned to the village of my initiation, word had travelled along the jungle grapevine that Tavua was back. This time I had a three piece take-down recurve bow with me. Atison, one of the mythical pygmy tribe journeyed through the jungle to see my bow for himself, as bowhunting plays an important part in the highland peoples subsistence lifestyle. We'd ventured into the jungle on hunts together and formed an

instant friendship. He promised when he returned to his village he'd seek permission for me to go on a pig hunt with his people. A message had been relayed down to our village that the necessary preparations had been made.

Rain threatened to sluice down from an angry looking waterlogged sky as the village roosters rubbed the sleep from their eyes and heralded the start of a new day. I was surprised to see Ravae roasting taro in the fire when I awoke and watched the cockroaches scurry for cover from under my sleeping mat as I went over and hugged the warming fire. I knew exactly how he felt. Only days before I'd undergone a similar healing ritual after killing and eating a snake while out hunting with Atison. Eating the reptile to curb my hunger was the first and last time I mistakenly breached tribal law, for the consequences can be dire. The superstitious villagers believe Damate, the spirit devil, sometimes inhabits snakes and meant the demon needed to be exorcised from my soul. While I was taking photo's of Atison with the snake draped over his shoulders



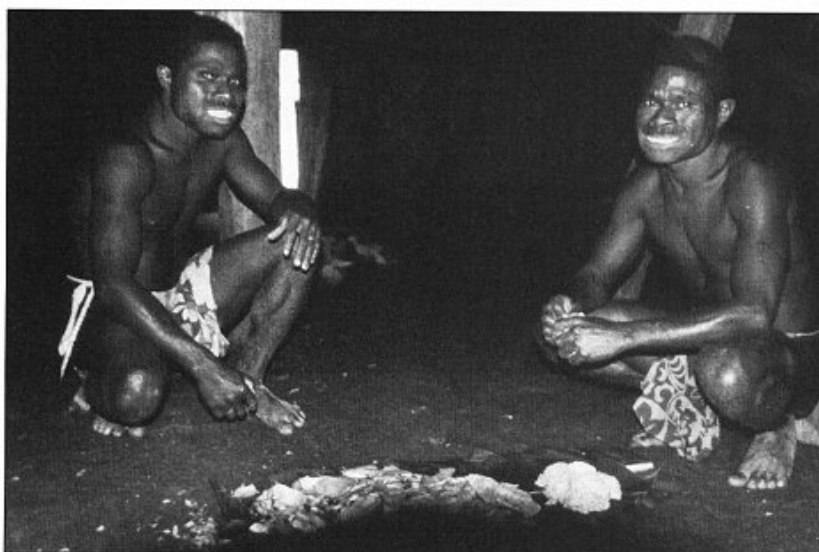
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at the base of a waterfall, we'd narrowly escaped injury when boulders rained down on us from the sheer rock face above us. Ravae, the village custom man (witch doctor) saw this as the devil unleashing his wrath upon me. My exorcism was completed when I drank a shell of two-day kava. For the next two days I was paralytic and comatose (hence the kava's name). When I awoke my whole body shook uncontrollably.

Only a slight tremor remained in my hands as Ravae pursed his lips and blew the hallowed tavue (conch shell). I did the same, then we both stepped over an oktre leaf and rubbed our hands with wild kava. Like all primitive tribes, these people's world isn't a divided one. Flesh and all of nature are entwined with powers which transcend man's limited capabilities. The sacred inheritance of these people's customs demanded we perform a rite to appease Melerapa and call upon his divine guidance before we went hunting.

Ravae looked tired, and barely well enough to cross a road yet alone the succession of blade-like ridges and seemingly bottomless valleys which lay ahead of us as we traipsed through the jungle. Only a slight tremor remained in my hands from my exorcism ritual and though I was still recovering from the effects of the mind-numbing kava, nothing was going to stop me accompanying Ravae to visit the mythical pygmy tribe.

The dry season had been far from that. A month of constant rain had turned the track we followed into an ankle-grabbing, energy-sapping quagmire. The waterlogged terrain brought out hordes of leeches who used us as a smorgasbord till we seared their bloated blood-filled bodies off with a lighter. For



Silas, and Peta were clean shaven, wore loincloths, and stood around four feet nine inches tall.

several sweat-soaked hours we slogged through the mud until we entered a small hamlet where we shared a fire-roasted taro with a bare-breasted old woman wearing nothing but a modest skirt of nagrea leaves and a nose bone.

Refreshed and refuelled, we pressed on. The terrain had gone from demanding to torturous. After carefully pushing our way across the foaming waters of a swollen river, a near vertical

calf cramping, thigh-burning climb separated us from the pygmy village. Ravae's infection seemed to be spreading, but despite his illness his strength and stamina were staggering. Sweat stung my eyes and oozed from every pore of my body while Ravae powered up the sheer face with seemingly tireless legs.

Busa, Silas, and Peta were clean shaven, wore loincloths, and stood around four feet nine inches tall. Their wide smiles showed they were more friendly than indifferent when we reached the top of the gut-busting climb and entered the village. The look of terror on a middle aged woman's face as she fled into the safety of a hut came as no surprise. She'd probably never seen the ocean, let alone a white man, and no doubt thought I was Damate (the devil) who villagers believe sometimes shows himself in the guise of a white spirit.

Busa, the village chief, had an air of dignity about him which commanded instant respect. I'd travelled through the jungle with him a year earlier for a full day, and though I'd asked if he was from the pygmy tribe, he said there were smaller white skinned people with long hair and pointed teeth who ran through the jungle at night. Having lived with other primitive tribes who file their teeth to a point, I didn't rubbish his claims about the pygmies, though I had

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Genesis 1:1      John 3:16      Matthew 5:16

serious doubts about their existence. The penny dropped when I finally realized Busa had been describing Damate. At the time I had no idea he was the highest-ranking chief of the legendary pygmies. By rearing and killing sacrificial pigs which play an important role in Melanesian society, he'd gained the elevated status of being the highest-ranking chief amongst all of the highland tribe's despite his small stature.

With the name of the remote village translating to "to eat man" it was no surprise that the surrounding villages treated Busa with the utmost respect. Busa's father, who passed away eight years ago, had shot and killed a member of a warring tribe with his bow in the 1940s. After carrying his slain victim back to the village he'd roasted the body and smashed a hole in its skull to suck out and eat the brains to empower his enemies spirit. This penchant for dining on human flesh in the past, nearly led to his people's extinction. The surrounding villages were tired of living in fear and banded together. Under the shroud of

darkness they attacked the unsuspecting pygmies. A virtual massacre followed. Those who were captured were held in a bamboo cage. Others fled into the jungle. A fire roared underneath the bamboo cage and barbarically roasted the pint-sized cannibals alive as they became their attackers main course. Only a handful of villagers survived the attack, then an epidemic of tuberculosis further reduced their numbers. Busa, Atison, Peta and Silas are the only surviving males of the tribe.

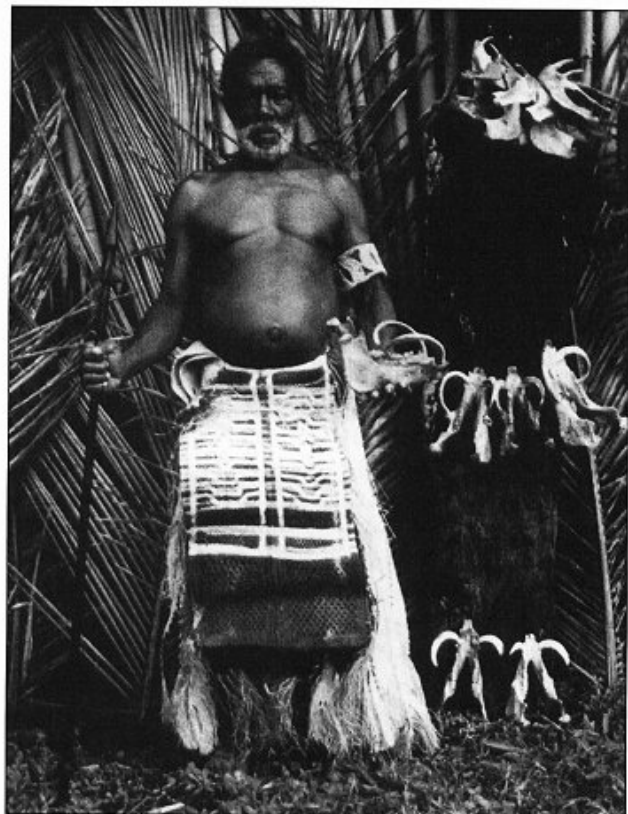
According to Busa, the only other white men to visit his village had dropped from the skies in a helicopter which landed on the grassy knoll above the village. The men had grabbed their bows and greeted the unwelcome chopper with a hail of arrows, forcing it to quickly fly away. Despite my six foot tall white frame, I was welcomed as a brother. My initiation into a tribe which shared the same customs had guaranteed me a warm reception. When I asked him how he would treat any visitors who brought trouble to his people, he answered without hesitation that he

would kill them but wouldn't eat them, as nowadays no one ends up as mystery mince or soup of the day. He then proudly pointed to the scar on his forehead he received when two larger men had picked a fight with him and knocked him to the ground with a club. The pocket Hercules had jumped to his feet and knocked both men out cold.

I'd lost count of the number of times I'd strung my bow and loosed arrows in the villages I visited, for the Ni-Vanuatu are expert archers and curious to see my bow in action. I could see all eyes were focused on my bow so I gave them a quick exhibition before we entered the hut for the formal welcome drink of kava.

When I sent an arrow hissing through the air into a piece of blackpalm hardwood, Milas literally jumped back as his eyes bugged out and he poked his tongue out in surprise. Firing a bow from the "clone age" in front of the virtual stone-age pygmies seemed to have as much impact as letting rip with a scud missile for the first time.

Watching them shoot with the bow when I handed it to them and told them to go for it was an unforgettable experience. Not only did they bear a striking resemblance to Africa's Ituri pygmies, but their mannerisms were the same. They roared with laughter and seemed to share the same love of dance as their African cousins as they did a jig after firing each arrow. The day's walk had taken its toll on both Ravae and I, so after Peta and Milas chewed and mixed a strong brew of kava to welcome us to the village, we both fell into a deep kava-induced sleep on our sleeping mats.



Chief Simon Garaekoro of Ambae Island with a prized collection of pig tusks.



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The sound of the conch shell being blown stirred me from my sleep as Milas and Peta went through the necessary ritual which precedes a hunt. Ravae lay shivering in a lather of sweat as he fought either one of the jungles many fevers or his worsening infection. He wasn't going anywhere. Busa and Atison were heading down to visit another village as I followed Peta and Milas into the predawn darkness.

Both men were dwarfed by their bows which they'd fashioned from a carefully chosen limb from the natora tree. To the pygmies a bow is deemed useless unless a kill is secured from its first arrow. The blood from the slain animal is rubbed into a notch carved in the bow to empower the animals spirit and give the bow rapee (power). Both men carried three wild cane arrows tipped with blackpalm. A long walk lay ahead of us before we would reach our hunting ground, as no wild pigs roam the upper reaches of the highlands. According to Peta, a custom man from a warring tribe had used black magic at the turn of the twentieth century to spite the pygmies, as they had killed and eaten his brother while he was out hunting for pork. In a fit of rage the witch doctor had banished all wild pigs to the steamy lowlands.

Rain sluiced down with the force that it can only generate in the tropics as the rising sun tried to vainly burn its way through a veil of dark rain clouds. Millennia of evolution has transformed Peta and Milas into the perfect bushmen. Incredibly strong despite their small size, and light and quick on their feet. I'd been praised for my agility in the jungle back at our village, but now I

felt like an invalid as I struggled to keep up. They moved with a natural agility as they casually travelled over greasy logs, slime covered rocks, and down near vertical mud-covered slopes. Four hours later when we stopped to dine on edible fungus and nakavika berries, I was more mentally tired than physically, as trying to keep up in the demanding terrain required total concentration.

The sun was well past its zenith when we reached our hunting ground. A vast tract of pristine jungle studded with tree ferns held me spellbound, as this was virgin territory for me. The scenery was breathtaking, literally. Like the violent history of my two pygmy friends ancestors, the contour of the land was far from gentle. We followed a well-worn pig run to an empty wallow, then pressed on till we came across a nearby patch of rooting where a huge boar had nosed the soft earth in search of worms and grubs. If there was a prize for tracking animals at the fastest speed, these pint-sized pig hunters would win hands down. Without consciously looking, their eyes were everywhere as we squelched along the game trail at a slow trot then slowed to a walk when the edges of the water-filled marks we were following were still sharp. We quietly trailed the prints to a gigantic banyon tree where the animals sometimes lay up in the tree's tangled mass of huge buttress roots. A painstaking stalk proved fruitless, as we peered amongst the weave of roots no one was home.

With only an hour of light left we stopped hunting and made quick time until we reached a huge rock and set up camp under its overhang. A fire blazed away to keep Damate and any other wayward spirits of the jungle at bay while we dined on the pith of a palm tree, orota nuts, and bush cabbage. Soaked to the skin, we stretched out on a bed of lap lap leaves around the fire. We all woke up during a fitful nights sleep, shivering with cold as we stoked and hugged the warming fire.

After a light breakfast of nuts washed down with a drink from a liana vine, Peta led us through a light drizzle as dawn was breaking. Running in wet pants had chaffed my crotch and overnight it had turned into a weeping mess which painfully reminded me of every step I was taking. A stiff breeze blew in our faces as we twisted and turned through the jungle along a game trail which wound its way down a ridge to the wallow we'd previously found. The imprint of yesterdays bristle where a large boar had used the wallow had since washed away. With no fresh sign in the area we moved on.

By late afternoon we'd covered a lot of country without seeing any game until the fresh marks of a small boar perked us up and the end of the persistent rain lifted our spirits. For just over an hour Silas trailed the wandering pig with the tracking skills of a bloodhound. The marks led us up a gentle sloping ridge bordered by a dirty-looking, fern-

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With a sense of urgency, Silas tracks the marks of a boar as the setting sun entombs the jungle with darkness.

filled gully. A shroud of mist hung in the air as the setting sun dipped into the horizon. I could feel the sense of urgency as Silas bent over and parted the fern to check for sign. A muffled grunt and the rustling of fern about thirty meters away screamed us to a halt as Silas quickly nocked an arrow. His approach to the unsuspecting pig as it noisily rooted amongst the fern held me spellbound. With his senses in overdrive his affinity with his surroundings were a joy to watch as hunched over like a question mark, his lithe body seemed to flow along the pig run and through the fern in virtual silence.

Peta and I shared in every one of his carefully placed footsteps as we held back and watched. Several times Silas froze and remained poised like a statue until the fern shook and the pig started feeding again. When the gap had closed to about eight meters he slowly stood up and reached full draw as the muscles flexed and twitched beneath his ebony skin. When the arrow hissed through the air Silas wasn't far behind

it. The blackpalm arrowhead punched its way through the pigs thick hide and into its flesh.

The boar squealed and scoffed in annoyance as the arrow found its mark and hit him right in the engine room. It had been a text-book shot. The mortally wounded pig wheeled and fled on a surge of adrenaline until Silas flew through the air and pounced on the hapless hog to end the hunt. Despite having hunted with primitive tribes around the world, I'd never witnessed anything like it. Silas had exploded like a

sprinter out of the starting blocks with amazing speed when he'd pounced on the boar. No doubt he knew tracking an

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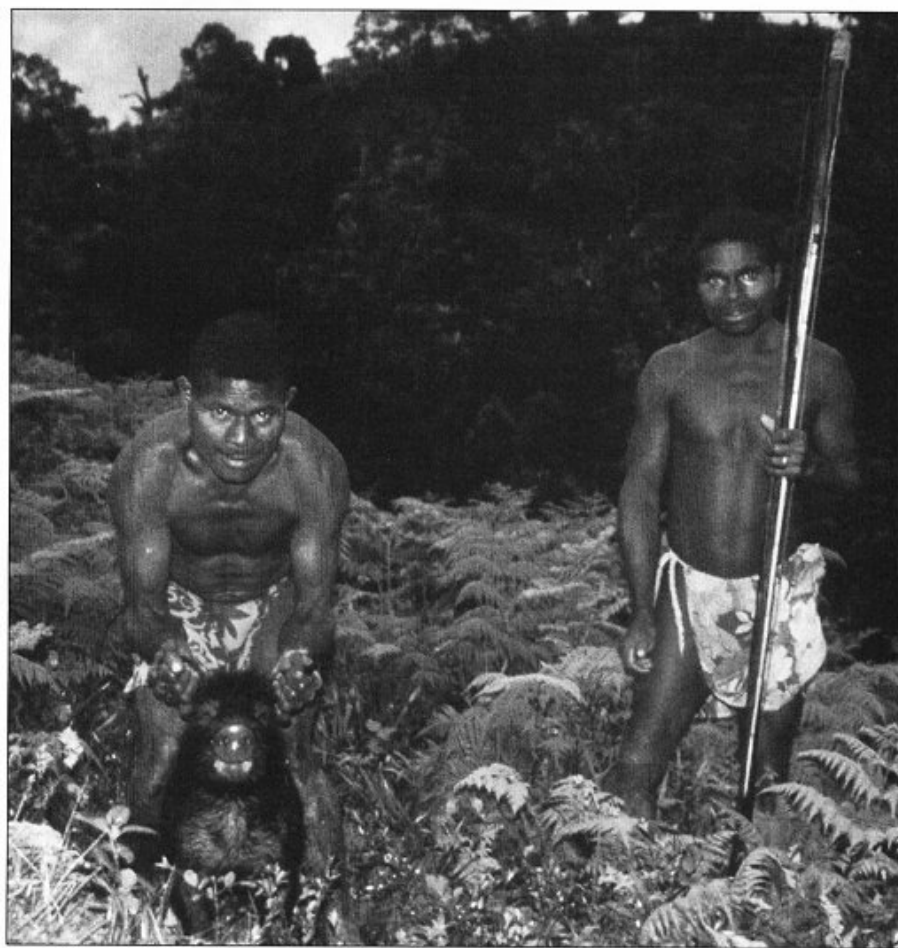
Bob is a former president of the Mississippi Archery Association and was inducted into the Mississippi Bowhunters Hall of Fame in 1989.

animal in total darkness in country this rough would be virtually impossible.

To say Peta and Silas were buzzing is an understatement. They both whooped and yelled as they ran and kicked a nearby tree, then looked towards the heavens as they yelled thanks to their custom god. Both men tucked sacred oktre leaves into their loincloths then laughed and sang aloud as they did the bolo dance to appease Melerapa and give thanks for his divine guidance during the hunt. I was grinning from ear to ear and burst out laughing as I shared in their happiness. Silas rubbed blood from the pig into the notch in his bow to empower the animals spirit for the next hunt. He then mumbled thanks to the animal for providing us with its flesh.

We roasted the pig's heart, kidneys, and liver over a fire which helped to dull the hunger pangs which had been stabbing at my stomach. With our bellies full we built a primitive shelter and fell asleep next to a blazing fire.

There were smiles all around when we arrived back at the village late the following day and divied out the pork. Ravae was still unwell but back on his feet after shaking off his fever. The following day we returned to our village. Late that evening Peta entered our smoke filled leaf hut with his hand wrapped in banana leaves. When we unwrapped the leaves one of his fingers hung limply from where he'd almost severed it with his machete while he was cutting firewood. We dressed the wound as best we could and I told him to head down to the coast and get proper treat-



Peta and Silas with the boar Silas killed with a single arrow from his natora bow.

ment. He said he would use custom medicine, then simply shrugged his shoulders and told me if he lost his finger he still had two thumbs and seven good fingers left, then burst out laughing.

Watching these expert archers take a pig with a primitive bow was a

huge buzz, but the true reward was simply spending time with these amazing people. Despite their fierce reputation these pint-sized pig hunters were all heart and couldn't have been more friendly.



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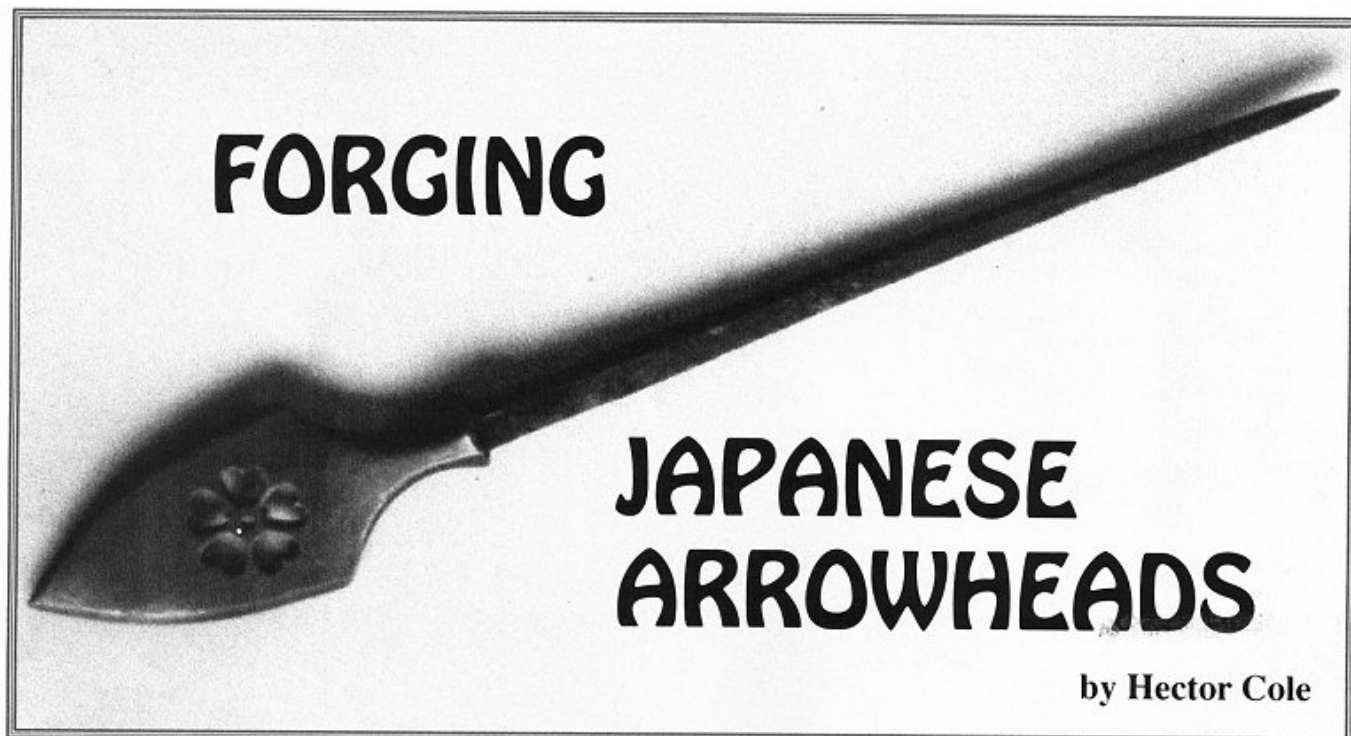


Illustration: Replica Japanese arrowhead hand forged in England by the author.

One of the questions that I wait for when people talk to me about forging swords is *"Oh, do you forge Samurai sword blades?"* My usual answer is *"No, I leave that up to the Japanese masters who know far more about forging their types of swords than I do."*

I suppose that being a Master arrowsmith, it was only a matter of time before the same question was asked about forging Japanese arrowheads. When first asked this question, the two Yanone (arrowheads) on the front cover of vol. 40 of the "Journal of the Society of Archer-Antiquaries" came to mind, as they are superb examples of heads made by one of the greatest master arrowsmiths in Japan's history. The thought that my client may want heads of that quality did not put me off, and I said that yes, I could make Japanese-style arrowheads.

Having committed myself, I then began to think about how the heads would have been forged. I came to the conclusion that being blades and weapons of war, they would be forged using the same techniques as the sword smiths, as they would have to take a sharp cutting edge and withstand impact. Being familiar with the full process of Japanese sword smithing, I decided that when the drawings came I should make the arrowheads using the same techniques.

When at last the drawing and details of the head came through, it was a relief to see that it was not a highly pierced and carved head. The head in question is described as follows: "Willow Leaf Arrowhead Pierced with One Cherry Blossom 'Yanagi-Ya.'" It was made by Takayori, a famous arrowhead maker who lived and worked in Echizen (Hukui) Province of Japan during the Teikyo Era in 1691. It is the type of head that would have been commissioned as a gift or as an offering after a successful battle and would not have been for shooting from the bow.

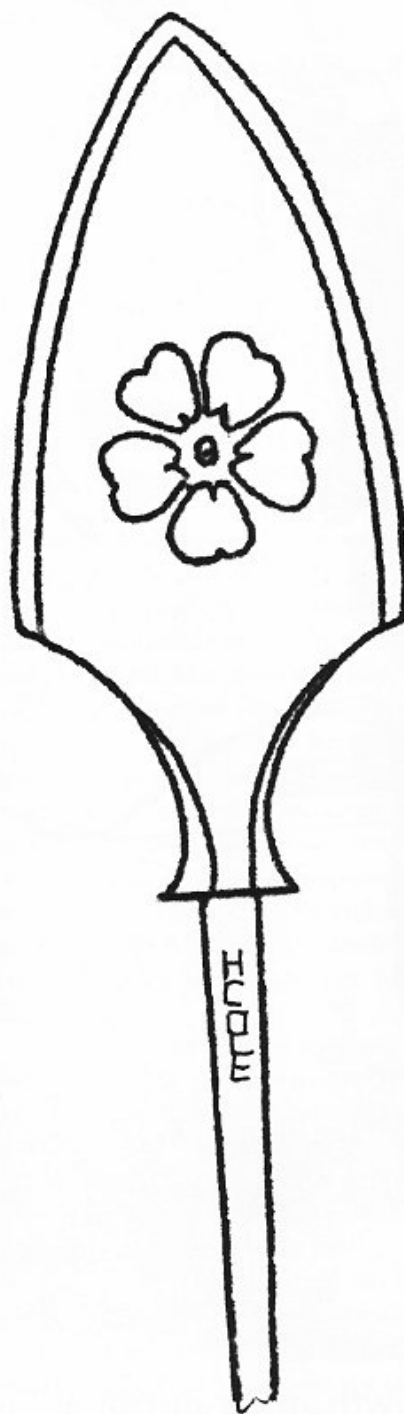
The first stage in making the head was to produce the metal for the outer layers of the blade. This was done by taking small pieces of wrought iron, low carbon steel, and high carbon steel and welding them together. When they were a solid piece of bar, the bar was folded and re-welded in different directions a number of times so that the different materials were well and truly mixed. The bar was then forged out into a long enough strip to make the head. The next stage was to forge to size the steel to make the cutting edges. This was the same width and thickness as the composite bar. The composite bar was then folded over and the steel inserted in the middle.

This sandwich was then welded up into a solid bar ready to start forging the head to shape. The section of the bar at this stage is important as too large or too small a section will result in the wrong size head. As this is a tanged arrowhead, I started by making the head first and the tang last. The neck of the head is forged first and then the point, before flattening out the blade slightly larger than the dimensions given to allow for finishing to size and polishing.

The tang was then roughly forged to shape before necking in the shoulders and forging to the finished size, allowing for cleaning up. The head was then brought to a cherry red heat and allowed to cool as slowly as possible to get it to its softest possible cold state ready to cut in the blossom. When the blossom had been cut the whole of the head was then given its final finish and polish, ready to be hardened.

The hardening is done by heating the head to an orange heat and quenching it in vegetable oil. It is at this stage that any flaws in the welding of the pieces will show up, and if they are too serious then the head is a failure and you start again. The head is then ready for its final polishing before bringing out the pattern created by the initial forging.

There are various methods of bringing up the pattern depending on the finish required. I prefer using an acid method that when complete gives a lovely plum brown to the surface as well as showing up the pattern. This treatment is done over a period of days until



the right amount of colour is achieved. The acid on the metal is then neutralized, and the whole of the head is dried and given a wax finish to help preserve the colour and surface of the metal.

These special heads were signed by the smith who made them, usually on a flat surface of the head so that it could easily be seen. As the head I made is an exact copy I signed it with my name on the tang, as shown, so that there will be no mistaking it for an original.

For the more technical readers, here is a breakdown of the processes and times taken: The fuel used was a mix of oak, ash, and hazel charcoal 1.5 inches down. The fire was blown by hand operated bellows. The preparing and forging of the bars took 60 minutes. The forging of the head took 75 minutes. The initial grinding and filing to shape took 50 minutes.

- The cutting of the petals: 120 minutes.
- The final cleaning and polishing: 60 minutes.
- The browning treatment: 30 minutes.
- Total working time: 7 hours.
- The dimensions of the arrowhead are as follows:
- Length of complete arrowhead: 9.5 inches
- Length of head: 3.22 inches
- Width of head at widest point: 1.56 inches
- Thickness of blade at center point: 0.07 inches
- Width of shoulder: 0.41 inches
- Thickness of shoulder: 0.42 inches
- Length of tang: 6.31 inches
- Width of tang behind shoulder: 0.24 inches
- Thickness of tang behind shoulder: 0.21 inches
- Width and thickness of tang at rear end: 0.05 inches
- Weight of complete arrowhead: 40.50 grams

I am pleased to say that my client was very pleased with the head and I have since made other Japanese heads of different designs. What I would like to know is, are there any arrowsmiths still working in Japan? If there are I would very much like to get in touch with them, see their work, and exchange technical details of our ancient and noble craft.



**Editor's Note:** Mr. Cole can be reached at: Hector Cole c/o Instinctive Archer 29 Batley Ct., Oldland S. Glos. UK BS30 8YZ

Ref:- A pair of Imperial House Yano-ne. George G. Vitt Jr. Journal of the Society of Archer-Antiquaries vol. 40

The Craft of the Japanese Sword. Leon and Hiroko Knapp. Yoshindo Yoshihara Kodansha International Ltd.



**T**he tremendous growth in “traditional” archery in recent years is something satisfying, but sometimes disconcerting to some of us older archers. It is surely no secret that shooting longbows and recurves is fun! Just follow a group of shooters around any 3-D course and see who is having a good time—and who is incredibly stressed if they don't get a perfect “10” on every target. The disconcerting part comes in when I run into someone like the new clerk at one of our local sport shops.

I had stopped in after work to pick up a half-dozen crimp-on metal nock points. This particular shop had a fully stocked archery department. Fully stocked—if you were into all of the accessories that the Archery Manufacturer's Organization (AMO) said you had to have to make your bowhunting and shooting easier. Like I said, I was there to pick up some nock points.

I told the clerk, a lad of about 20 or 21, what I needed and, as he dug out the proper box, he informed me that he didn't use such things because he was a "Traditional Archer."

Now I found that statement to be very interesting because I had never really thought about nock points as being either "traditional" or "non traditional." I guess I always just thought of them as nock points! When I acquired my first store-bought bow back in the fifties, I didn't use, or even know, about nock points. When I did find out about the advantages of using such a thing, I simply made my own.

Those first nock points were made with carpet thread and rubber cement. It wasn't until about 10 or 12 years ago that I tried the metal crimp on type. I found that if they were applied correctly they did not slip or move. The arrow nock did not wear a groove in them, and they did not fray or unravel with use. I have been using them ever since.

I told this young man that I was also a traditional archer and asked him what kind of bow he shot. He drew himself up into a very self-important looking pose and informed me he had a number of custom bows that he used! Now I have been "bow poor" myself, so I gave a little chuckle and said, "Lord don't we all."

He then proceeded to list every bowyer he had ever dealt with, emphasizing the custom nature of each bow and the correspondingly high price of each and every added option. He seemed to be of the opinion that no bow was

capable of launching a decent arrow if it cost less than \$1,000.

As he recited his mantra of big names and bigger price tags, I could not rid my mind of one recurring thought, "Man, your parents give you way too much money!" I probably would have passed this incident off as just an isolated curiosity if I had not started running into similar situations at some 3-D shoots around the area.

Ten years ago, it was unusual to find more than a couple of us traditional guys at a 3-D shoot. Often I would show up and be the only guy with a longbow and cedar arrows out of 250 or 300 shooters. This past weekend we had more than 25 traditional shooters at the 3-D shoot I attended. Most of us were there to have a good time and get in some much needed practice. As usual we sort of gravitated together, checking out each other's equipment and introducing ourselves. Suddenly, one fellow started pointing out all of the custom options on his takedown recurve, citing the high cost and rarity of each. He ended by letting us know that his bow had cost over \$1,500.00.

We stood there a moment in awe, then I finally managed to ask, "How does it shoot?" He said he had just got it a few months before and hadn't really gotten around to shooting it much, but that it was one-of-a-kind and cost \$1,500, so it must shoot exceptionally well!

And therein, my friends, lies the problem. It seems that in certain circles our beloved sport has become a "Bo-Bo" fad. (To the uninitiated a Bo-Bo is a successor to the Yuppies—a Bourgeois Bohemian, characterized by—among other things—conspicuous consumption!)

This phenomenon has gotten so bad in fly fishing that I won't even admit to owning a fly rod except to my closest friends! If caught on the stream, I will look dumb and say that I am only holding the rod for a friend who went to get me a fresh supply of worms! It hasn't reached that point in archery yet, but I am some-

times fearful of the directions I see some people taking.

Maybe the time has come for a lot of us to just sit back and look at what we do and why we do it. Maybe what we need is more emphasis on what is really important in archery and bowhunting. Maybe we need to worry less about the price of our equipment and more about the value of our experiences.

What price can we put on the priceless friendships we have acquired through archery? What price on the sight and smell of an October deer woods in that misty predawn? Should we put a price on these things at all? Maybe we should just appreciate what has been put before us and thank God that we have been privileged to see and be a part of such things!

Does an expensive bow make us a better hunter or a better person? Of course not! Does an expensive bow make us a better shot? No! A new bow, one that fits us in hand and draw weight, can be the start of better shooting—but that will only come with dedication and practice. Where did some of us ever get the idea that if we throw enough money at something it will make us a better or more skillful person?

I shoot with a number of different people over the course of a year. In my area, 3-D shoots are becoming so popular that there is one going on almost every weekend from January to the beginning of deer season in October. When I think of all the traditional shooters I know, a couple of thoughts become clear. Though they come from varied economic backgrounds, they all shoot the best equipment they can afford—not necessarily the most expensive—but the equipment they consider the best value and performance for their money.

Not one of them is impressed solely by a high price tag or a "big name." They are impressed by a smooth draw and a "snappy" cast. They do appreciate an exceptional piece of wood or an artful finish. But price for the sake of price? A big name? Not hardly! And

really, isn't that the way it should be?

We were talking about this subject recently and one of the fellows asked me what I would consider to be a good example of a "Fad" bow. That seemed like an easy question to answer, but as I started to reply I suddenly found that I couldn't. Eventually I realized that there was no proper answer for that question. You buy a bow because you like the way it looks or because of a good price. Hopefully you get all three. But just because you pay a higher price than Charley down the street does not mean it is a "Fad" bow. It just means that particular bowyer feels that his work is worth more than "bowyer X."

There are no fad bows, there is only fad thinking by people who don't quite seem to get it.

Of course there is an up side to all this as well. Not long ago I was shooting a 3-D course with a fellow who was shooting an exceptional looking Bighorn custom recurve. Now I know what a Bighorn costs, and I know that my friends who own them

say they are worth every penny of their price, but I have always felt that they were a little steep for my economic situation. Besides, I am a diehard longbow man.

We had stopped to talk and take a break, waiting for a large group of compound shooters who were shooting ahead of us. I asked to look over his bow, and was impressed by its under-

stated elegance and obvious attention to detail that always is an indicator of quality. The riser was signed "Custom made for Bill W\_\_\_\_\_."

As we walked along, shooting and talking, I kept calling this fellow "Bill." Finally he said his name was not Bill, his name was Jim. I asked about the

started shooting two problems immediately presented themselves. One was the fact that he had ordered a much heavier draw weight than he could comfortably handle. The other was his discovery of the fact that in order to be able to hit consistently, he was going to have to practice, practice, and practice some

more. It wasn't long before the novelty wore off and that was when Jim stepped in and became the proud owner of a near new Bighorn for \$250.

So take heart! Eventually most of those people who are getting into traditional archery for all of the wrong reasons will grow tired of having to work at something that they don't really like and will go back to their golf clubs or compounds or whatever it was they were doing before they "went traditional." When that happens, the rest of us should be able to snag a few real bargains on the used bow market. Come to think of it, maybe I could use one of those takedown Bighorns myself.

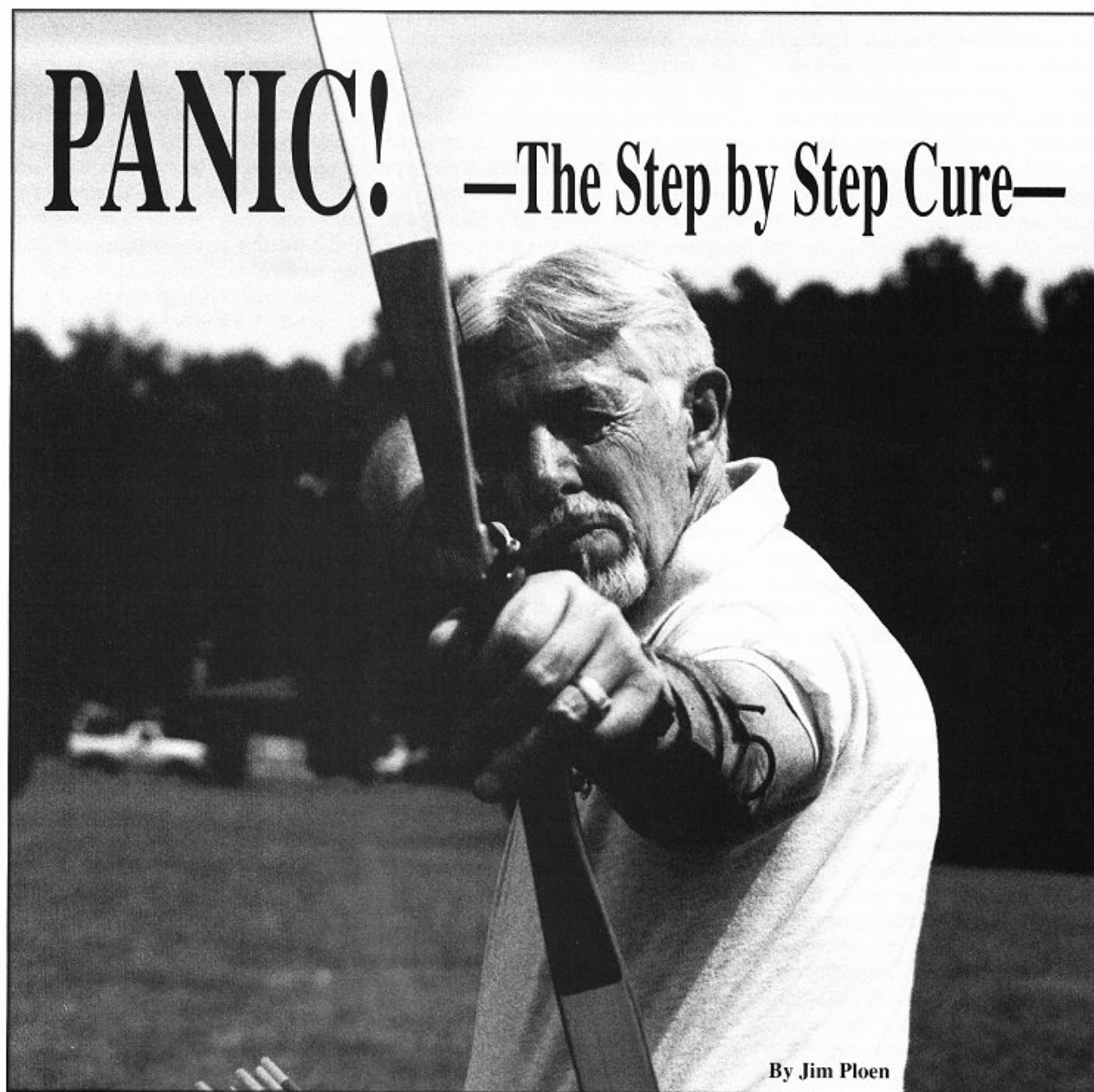
And who knows? Maybe some of those people will discover what it is the rest of us already know. It's not about the money or the "prestige." It's about a way of life and a tradition that goes back thousands

of years. It is about an appreciation for wild places and wild things, the beauty of all creation, and our part in it. It is what makes our hearts mourn for Ishi and his people, while at the same time, our souls soar with the flight of our arrows. It is the best, and it is ours!



**And who knows? Maybe some of those people will discover what it is the rest of us already know. It's not about the money or the "prestige." It's about a way of life and a tradition that goes back thousands of years.**

name on the riser and he told the story. It seems that Bill is a fellow he knows at work. Bill is a compound shooter but a while back he got it in his head that being a "traditional" archer sounded "cool." He checked around and, based solely on cost, he decided to get a Bighorn. When the bow finally arrived Bill was in his glory, and he strutted around the range like a gobbler in full strut! But when he



# PANIC!

## —The Step by Step Cure—

By Jim Ploen

**B**efore we can cure target panic we need to know the symptoms, the causes and the effects that this malady exerts on each of the acts of drawing the bow to anchor, holding to aim, and releasing the string. The symptoms vary, but they include inability to come to full draw while aiming at the target and, once at full draw, being unable to move the bow to the proper aiming position to hit the intended target. It is a leading cause for would-be archers giving up the sport.

Archery can be one of the simplest of sports, one in which one uses just a bow, a string, and an arrow. It is one that holds a fascination for many. The history of the bow is

part of its appeal—it is so rich that one can make a life-long study of the bow, its materials, the woods used, the backings for the limbs, limb shape and bow lengths, grips, rests, sight windows, and their origins. Study of its history reveals that changes in materials, design, and construction of the bow have occurred all through history.

Despite all the design and material changes, one thing has not changed in conventional archery—the fact that in drawing the string, the archer provides the energy that is stored in the bow. As long as the bow has a string attached directly to the limb tips, the principles are the same for recurves, flat bows, longbows, self-bows, or composite bows.

The archer provides the energy that is stored when bending the limbs by drawing the string. Nevertheless, the bow's design can contribute to shooter's (target) panic. Not being able to reach a comfortable anchor because the bow "stacks" is one major cause of target panic that can be greatly affected by bow design. Anticipating hand-shock is another.

"Stacking," which is an accelerating increase in the force needed to draw an arrow each additional inch, can be recognized by plotting a force-draw curve. This is a plot of draw weight, usually at one-inch increments from brace-height to full draw. If the draw weight increases appreciably more during the last few inches than earlier in the draw, the bow is said to "stack." Any increase over about four pounds per inch will feel to you as if you were hitting a wall as you try to reach your anchor. This can lead to target panic as you struggle to reach your anchor at the same time that you are trying to take careful aim at your target.

The symptoms of target panic include not being able to draw to anchor, premature release of the string, flinching, snap shooting, and freezing. Freezing is the inability to move the bow arm when trying to adjust the alignment of the arrow. Most of these symptoms result from shooting a bow with too heavy a draw weight, but freezing can develop no matter what type of bow an archer chooses. The very act of drawing a heavy bow builds tension in the muscles being used, and in the tendons that attach them to the bones that can lead to

a protective reflex relaxation of the tension or a flexor reflex. A flexor reflex is a movement which occurs without a conscious decision from the brain.

There are many different types of reflexes, but the one we are the most aware of is the flexor reflex that reacts to pain and is part of our self-protection. We will quickly withdraw any part of our body the instant it is hurt. No conscious decision on our part is needed to jerk away from the area of pain. A lack of self discipline that leads to the inability to control these reflexes while shooting is a major reason we lose so many archers, and why the compound bow became so popular. The high let-off of the latter makes it much easier to hold at full draw with the muscles relaxed.

Olympic-style archers shooting at targets out to seventy and ninety meters are not able to group consistently with traditional recurve or long bows drawing more than forty-two to forty-six pounds for men. Our own physiological and psychological make-up working for us and yet against us makes archery one of the most challenging of sports to master.

Input from other stimuli can also bring about reflexes. The brain tries to anticipate our actions and this in itself can trigger a conditioned reflex reaction. Can attempting to aim contribute to shooter's panic? Indeed it can! For instance, the input through the eyes, seeing the movement of the sight or hand or

alignment of the arrow can be enough to trigger a reflex release of the string. Whether one uses a bow sight, or the arrow tip in setting a gap, or simply uses the bow hand as an aiming reference, the "freezing" form of target panic can develop. Usually it begins only after the archer tries to master the skills needed to excel when he or she becomes aware of the difficulty involved in reaching the master level.

Much has been written about cures for panic. Each article has some merit because all that is needed to cure target panic temporarily is a change. It takes a little time to reacquire to the new feel before reflexes again take over. I always enjoyed the statement that you can put a cigarette paper under your left heel and it will help for one shot. So will a new stance, or a squat, or a new grip like holding the bow far out on the thumb pad or tucking a finger in between your hand and the bow grip. Changing anchors or a new tab or glove, changing draw weight, even a new finger grip on the string also may help for a while. All of these changes can be of some benefit, but without a fundamental understanding of the causes, and a set shooting style based on control, we may think we know the reason for our miss or blame our problems on the equipment or poor selection of arrow matching to the bow.

After we go through learning procedures that are not instinctive but must be

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practiced consciously to develop strength and style, we can reach a stage where we can complete the actions with little conscious thought. The more we practice, the more skillful we become in the acts of drawing, anchoring, holding, aiming, and releasing. Our conditioned reflexes also become honed to respond to the stimuli setup by the very actions needed to perfect the shot.

So where do we start? First, we must be able to recognize the problem. Then we must admit that we do have a problem and look for a positive program to develop new conditioned reflexes by retraining muscle memory and the brain circuitry to make us masters of ourselves in the act of shooting the bow. We are told that it takes twenty to twenty-one days to break and retrain a habit. In our case this means we need to shoot about 2,000 arrows shooting 100 arrows a day for twenty days without trying to test ourselves by going to a tournament that would interrupt our training program. Be sure that you know and recognize your problem.

- Is it your inability to reach an anchor?
- Shooting by feel without really aiming the arrow?
- Shooting without alignment?
- Snap shooting?
- Freezing off the spot?

Know what your problem is and work at solving that problem. Develop a shooting style that has a solid basis and feels good to you. You must develop such a consistent form that you can recognize your shooting mistakes by where the arrows hit on the target when you know it was a well aimed arrow.

Start your new training program using a light draw-weight bow; thirty-five to forty pounds is ideal. Stand about ten yards from your arrow backstop (with or without a target to aim at). Raise your bow to a pre-shooting position and align the arrow with your peripheral vision as you concentrate on the spot. This sets your bow hand and bow arm as well as aligning your drawing hand and arm. Concentrating your attention on "the spot" as you start your draw can be likened to moving your fin-

ger to the flame of a candle, likewise starting to feel the heat can be thought of as parallel to the brain starting to anticipate your coming to anchor.

Just as the heat triggers a withdrawal reflex, concentrating on "the spot" can trigger a conditioned reflex release of the string. Similarly, the buildup of tension in the muscles may trigger a reflex release and the arrow goes where it happened to be pointed at that instant.

In order to gain control of our shot we must "blow out that candle," that is, remove the stimulus that prevented us from coming to a full draw. By that I mean that once you have pre-aimed in your set-up, you must take your eye off the spot (like blowing out the candle) and look at the arrow shelf. Then watch the arrow as it comes back until you are at full draw at your selected anchor.

Starting to refocus on the spot is like relighting that candle. The hot spot is there triggering a reflex, but at least you were at a full draw. That's a start, but it is not the answer to shooting with control. Control comes only when you come to feel that you are aiming at the cold wick, not the hot flame of a lit candle. Take one step at a time to retrain—replace all the conditioned reflexes that constitute target panic. This is going to take some hard and persistent work. After all, you shot a lot of arrows developing those bad habits and reflex responses, and it will take a lot of controlled shots to replace them.

Start with your pre-draw set-up. Pick and focus on "that spot" and aim the arrow with your peripheral vision. Then again blow out that candle by looking at your rest without moving your pre-aligned bow hand. Draw and you will come to a full draw, holding at your pre-selected anchor. Now close your eyes. Hold and get a feeling for holding, then release (with your eyes still closed). That is your second step. The first one was just to get you to anchor, the second to close your eyes and feel the hold at the anchor. Shoot a lot of arrows with your eyes closed just to retrain your reflexes and to get a feeling for holding.

We will keep adding one more step at a time so that you do not start to anticipate the action and trigger an uncontrolled reflex. We are not introducing the aiming of the arrow at this time, only the

pre-aim before we start the draw so that you can stay on target with your shot with your eyes closed. This is the time to add another step and that is the motivation for the release. With no hot spot you are able to draw to anchor and hold.

Now is time to develop the release motivation. While at full draw, tighten the back muscles that move the scapulae of both the bow arm and the drawing side in the back. The feeling is like that of pushing with one shoulder blade to firm the bow arm as you again start to draw by firming the scapula of the drawing shoulder. Do this in unison so both are working together, with equal intensity.

That feeling of equal tension pulling both shoulder blades together is the motivation for a perfect in-line release. Practice shooting in this manner for a couple of shooting sessions until it becomes learned and you start to shoot groups with your eyes closed. In this way you will be setting a routine that gives you something to do after the aim, in this case after you close your eyes. That means that aiming will not be the stimulus to release, that stimulus will be the feeling of restarting of the draw after aiming by firming the shoulder blades. It's the tightening that gives you an in-line release. This feel of starting to draw in the back will become automatic and the motivation for releasing.

The balance of tension between the scapulae will determine how closely your matched arrows will group in the target. This procedure to retrain and gain control of your reflexes will take 20 days or 2000 arrows to build the confidence needed to put you back in control of the shot.

Putting it all together, shooting an aimed arrow with control starts with your pre-draw. Take a comfortable stance and hold your bow in a pre-draw to set the string alignment. It is important that you hold the bow so that the arrow is aligned with the target to match the arrow-plate build-out of your bow. Remember to align the string with the arrow, not the center of the bow. (This will be covered under tuning in a later article). With both eyes open to help you to judge distance using your depth perception, pick a spot, and, in your scenic



**Stand about ten yards from your arrow backstop (with or without a target to aim at). Raise your bow to a pre-shooting position and align the arrow with your peripheral vision as you concentrate on the spot. This sets your bow hand and bow arm as well as aligning your drawing hand and arm. Concentrating your attention on "the spot" as you start your draw. . .**

view of the target, you should see bow/arrow/target relationship. Then align the vertical alignment to set the arrow trajectory.

Now, without moving the bow arm, start your draw. Keep looking at the arrow rest, not at the target, until you can come to a solid anchor and hold. It is important to let your focus change slowly from looking at the arrow rest to the spot on the target, to check your aiming of the arrow in your peripheral view. Now close the eye that you are not anchoring below and you will see a much clearer view of aiming the arrow, especially if you cant the bow slightly using the arrow as a pivot point.

Remember that aiming should not be a motivation to release or to cause a

reflex release. You are aiming at the wick, not the hot flame. You still have another step before you release, and that is the final setting of the scapula to firm the bow arm and tighten the muscles around the scapulae to set the in-line release.

Setting the tension in your back should be your motivation to release. The reflex is triggered by the proper tension in the back after the aiming. I think that you can now see what we are trying to accomplish by having a set procedure with steps that must be completed before the next step is introduced. In that way you do not start to anticipate the action that would trigger a reflexive release response.

Once you are in control of the aim you will be able to set your own style and that may be keeping both eyes open, only closing one when needed, or keeping your focus on the spot through the draw to anchor and aim. Then start the motivation to release. You can always go back to the basic step-by-step format if you feel you are losing control.

Just remember that it will take time to retrain in the first place, so have patience. As you move back from the target, you will find that at some distance it will be harder to stay in control. Go back toward the target a few steps. Regain your control and confidence and try again.



# The Shots We Dream of

by Jerry Stout



**A**s we go on in this bowhunting world and have shot a bow for many years, we learn things that can make us better bowhunters (I hope). I started this passion of mine that we call bowhunting back in 1957 and have seen a lot of changes and have learned a lot since then.

I believe that the single most important thing I've learned is to take those "give me" shots. (That's "gimme" where I come from.)

I'm not talking about those 20 to 25 yard shots, I'm talking about those super-close, perfect setups, a "slam dunk" if you will. These are the ones we all think and dream of during the off season.

Just a few weeks ago I was at a 3-D shoot and a bunch of people were standing around talking about shots and game, etc. I made the remark that if I could have everything perfect, every shot for me would be at 12 yards. I think that is perfect.

Your Editor Rik was there, and he said "I like eight yards a lot better." Everyone laughed and said "Yeah, right!"

Just a few short years ago, I became pretty cocky about my hunting. After a few years of taking big bulls and big bucks most of the time, I got to the point that I thought I had to do that every year. Therefore, I started passing on those

gimme shots so I could try for a better trophy. One such hunt went like this.

I was hunting elk here in eastern Oregon, and one evening I was walking up a draw on a very dusty trail. Due to the depth of the dust, I could walk as quiet as a cat. Suddenly I heard a funny noise. I stopped and looked through a thick, bushy juniper tree and I could see something moving slowly, so I nocked an arrow. About then a spike bull came feeding out into plain sight. His head was down low behind sagebrush as he fed on the dry grass. He was ten yards from me and a little uphill. As he walked broadside to me I started to think (that was my first mistake), "I don't want to shoot a spike, I've got three or four days of the season left and surely I will get another big bull before it's over."

Then I had a second thought that, well, maybe I should take him, but his leg was way back and covering the heart area. Well, that was a real good excuse not to shoot and then just as I told myself that, he took a big step forward with that right leg and kept feeding.

Now, I want to tell you that when he made that move that pocket behind the front leg opened up like a pumpkin, only ten yards away. That was a "gimme" for sure, but I did-

n't take it and I also didn't get an elk that year. That winter I talked to myself often and also thought about how good the elk would be in the freezer.

I am sure it was the very next year when I was hunting in the bottom

of a small canyon. I was in the middle of an aspen grove when I heard some cows and calves talking and moving my way. I was right next to the game trail they were traveling on, and ran around in a circle looking for a place to hide, but couldn't find one. Then I saw a big old aspen tree that had been blown down and was hanging in some others at an angle that I could climb like a monkey, which I quickly did and fixed a place that I could shoot from.

The elk fed closer and I could count seven or eight cows and calves, and two spikes. The next thing I knew, they were all around me, and not one of them had spotted me. One of the spikes was in a perfect place for a shot nine feet away. Well, I passed another gimme shot and went another year without an elk. For the next several months I talked to myself a lot and kept telling myself that it shouldn't be that way!

I just returned from a spring bear hunt in northern Idaho, where they, unlike Oregon, are still allowed to bait bears. Now here is a funny on me. The first evening that I hunted my bait after a bear had started hitting

it, a nice black bear came in. I wasn't in a tree stand, as I prefer to hunt from the ground. I like to stay 50 yards or so away from the bait and then stalk in on a pre-cleaned trail. In this case, the trail would allow me to get within eight yards of the bait. I thought to myself, "Now this is a Rik shot for sure!"

I looked the bear over and thought, "Well, this is the first night and I've got two weeks and lots of bait. Maybe I can get a bigger one, so maybe I'll just take a picture of this one."


This little camera that I have has all the bells and whistles and electronic gadgets that you can put in a camera. I crept up behind a big tree and slipped the noisy electronic camera inside my jacket to cover the sound of turning it on and setting up the zoom lens so the bear couldn't hear the motor drive whizzing and whirring. With the camera all set up and ready to go, I picked up my bow and moved in on the bear. When I reached the tree at the end of my trail, eight yards from the bear, I peeked around to get a close look at him. "Man, this bear is a lot bigger than I thought he was." I thought to myself, "I'd better shoot him instead of taking a picture."

So I laid my bow down and tried to quietly slip the bread sacks off of my arrows (I use them to keep the fletching dry when it is raining, which it was at the time.) Just then I had a bad thought. "Oh no! That camera automatically turns itself off, and when it does, it goes through all that motor drive B.S. In reverse."

Well, I had no more thought that when it happened, and you can't believe how loud that little camera's motor sounded in the still of the forest. I took a peek with one eye around the tree and that bear was looking straight at me. He just turned and walked slowly away, looking back at me over his shoulder, and I never saw him again. I had just been "had."

A couple of evenings later, as I was watching the bait from my vantage point farther up the mountain, a nice cin-

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Jerry, a retired government trapper, used his lifelong knowledge of Western game and his stalking skills to sneak within eight yards of the Idaho Bruin.

namon bear came into the bait. This time I left the little noise maker in my pack and slipped down to my eight-yard tree. I took a close look at the bear and told myself that he sure is pretty, but he's not as big as the black one. He kept moving around and changing shot angles. He once looked right at me, and took two or three steps toward me, really looking me over hard, trying to figure me out.

Now, I think this is where I am supposed to say "If it wasn't for this certain brand of camouflage and scent cover and suit and dirt-smelling soap, etc., I would have been detected and it would have been all over!"

Well, I don't believe all that B.S., and don't use any of it. I do "ALL" of my hunting in street clothes, and look at all the money I save. But that's another story.

The bear returned to eating and gave me a perfect broadside view with his head down behind a log, but again, there was one thing wrong, his leg and shoulder joint were back, right over the heart/lung area. Just as I thought about that, it happened. Without raising his head from behind the log, for some



unknown reason, he raised that paw and leg and put it right on top of the log. That pocket looked as big as the bottom of a washtub.

The arrow was gone. I hadn't told myself to do this or that, but it was already over. I had a complete pass through and the arrow was sticking in a log on the other side of where the bear had been. Now that was a "gimme" shot if there ever was one!

He was not the biggest or the best bear ever, but I don't really care. I got to do it my way, and got my kind of shot, and would really like to think that Ishi had something to do with setting it up that way.

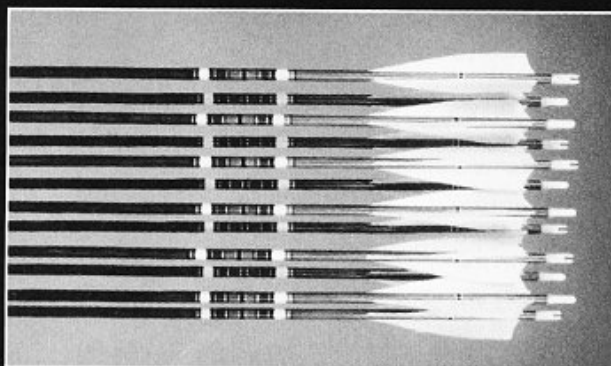


—Jerry was shooting one of his own 57-pound Juniper Mountain longbows, a hard rock maple shaft, and a 160-grain Grizzly broadhead, for a total weight of 680 grains.



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# BLUE GNU

By Ricardo Longoria

**T**he wildebeest, as a species, has long been associated with the mass migrations taking place while on the move to new feeding grounds. These enormous groups of migrating wildebeest were at one time among the most impressive displays that the African continent provided for its visitors. Though the erecting of game fences, in what used to be an important part of their migration routes, has limited these mass migrations substantially, they still occur to a certain degree in Botswana.

In most circumstances, the wildebeest limit themselves to living in herds of up to 30 individuals. These herds will usually consist of one mature or territorial bull with his cows and calves. They will travel in a herd around their home range and even cross through other territorial bulls' areas. Often, a small bachelor herd will be found at the edge of the main herd.

Being principally grazers, wildebeest are most likely to be found in the open savanna woodland and open grassland.

The common or brindled wildebeest exists as four different subspecies. These subspecies are commonly known as the white bearded wildebeest of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania; the nyasa wildebeest of southeastern Tanzania and northern Mozambique; the cookson wildebeest of Zambia's Luangwa Valley; and the blue wildebeest of southern Angola, western Zambia, northern and eastern Namibia, Botswana, southern and western Zimbabwe, and virtually the entirety of the Republic of South Africa.

I have had the pleasure of encountering both blue wildebeest and black wildebeest while hunting various areas of the northern province of South Africa. Though I have yet to harvest a black wildebeest, the blue gnu have been on the receiving end of numerous well-placed arrows in recent years. Their stamina and keen senses make them one of the more difficult plains game species to hunt and a priority for most bowhunters in Africa.

The first blue wildebeest I took was in a late September hunt at Howard Knott's Alldays Ranch. It was on

the final evening of a successful and rewarding hunt on which I had hunted hard and been successful beyond my highest expectations. My professional hunter (PH), Robbie, and I were in a somewhat anti-climatic mood after having successfully harvested a southern roan some days earlier. Going out and hunting that evening was more in the spirit of wanting to enjoy a last evening of hunting and game viewing, than in the desire to attempt to arrow anything else.

When we arrived at our destination, one of the thatch ground blinds at Howard Knott's Alldays Ranch, the wind was completely at our backs. There was almost no point in even hunting because all of the game would be alerted to our presence long before even coming into water. However, I reminded myself that it was the last evening of our hunt and I might as well stay and make the best of the afternoon.

Furthermore, oftentimes in southern Africa the wind will suddenly change at a moment's notice.

The wind had already changed directions in an abrupt manner several times during this trip and there was no reason why things could not change this evening. Another interesting point is that at times the animals seem to not pay attention at all to the smell of humans or maybe they are just used to the smell. I have had several animals that would normally disappear at the smallest whiff of my scent, come right into a waterhole when the wind was clearly at my back. This time however, the wind turned in our favor and we did not have to rely on the animals being careless.

We sat in the blind a long time before seeing anything. The first animal to show itself was a female duiker. She did not come into the water, but instead walked by at about seven yards from the blind. Then we saw a small female steenbuck. It always astounds me how small some of the antelope species can be on the Transvaal when you have others like the eland and roan that are huge.

As we sat in the blind, with little animal activity, I was beginning to feel a little bit of discouragement. Though I was extremely satisfied with the results of our hunt, I guess the fact that it was over was what was bringing

this feeling of sadness over me. I was really not ready to head home and leave Africa once again. However, to pass the time, I contented myself with playing out the taking of the roan over and over again in my mind.

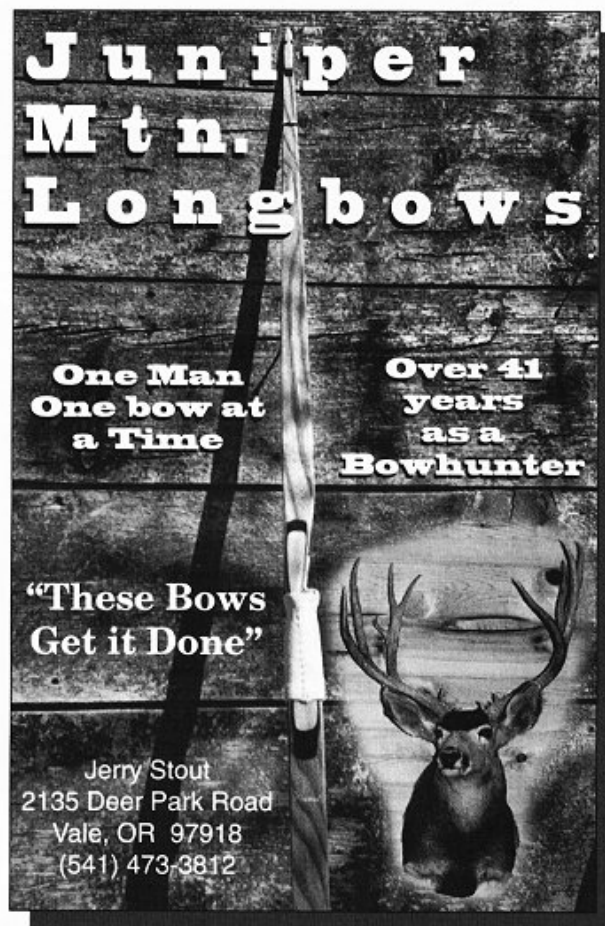
At one point, I stood up and began to glass in the distance to see if I could pick up anything in the brush. I noticed a patch of white; identifying it as a gemsbok. Looking more closely, I made out the silhouette of yet a second one. We waited patiently to see if either of those would come into water. Not that I was interested in taking another one, but simply because it is such a thrill to admire the beauty of these animals at close range.

While I was occupied gazing at the gemsbok through my binoculars, a lone Impala showed up at the water. It put its nose up to test the air and was trying to make us out, though never really becoming startled. Finally, satisfied that there was no imminent threat, it drank and then milled about the waterhole. This was enough to give the gemsbok the necessary courage to come into the water.

As the gemsbok approached, I examined them more closely and began trying to determine the sex of each individual animal. I noticed that the first one was a male. It wasn't huge, but a nice one for somebody interested in a gemsbok. I then shifted my gaze to the second one in line, intent on trying to determine its sex. It is kind of difficult as both the males and females have similar size horns. Just the thickness of their bases or the appearance of an almost unnoticeable penis sheath, serve to identify the difference between the two. Behind them, suddenly, I saw something dark moving. It was a wildebeest!

Since my first trip to Africa, I had really wanted to take a wildebeest. My first opportunity had actually presented itself only the day before, but it was not a fully mature bull. As Robbie studied the one before us, he gave me the thumbs up and said that it was a good bull. Our quiet afternoon of merely observing animals was now filling with excitement. My mood of tranquility and indifference was now one of excitement and tension. It was now a game of timing. The sun was setting fast and the wildebeest bull was coming across the veldt and towards the water at a very slow pace. Would he get there soon enough for me to have a shot opportunity?

I was standing and had an arrow knocked the entire time the bull was approaching. I would not be able to wait for the perfect shot. As soon as the bull got within range and gave me a proper angle I would have to take it; even at twenty or twenty five yards. It kept coming closer and was finally standing broadside on the opposite side of the waterhole. It was dark, but I was



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Patience is perhaps an archer's best virtue. The author's perseverance on last evening of the last day of the hunt was rewarded with his first wildebeest, and the perfect ending to an unforgettable African safari.

still able to pick a small spot on the bull's dark side. I pulled back my long-bow and released. The arrow flew true and whispered through the ribs and into the vitals. I was quite surprised that I did not get a complete passthrough. The broadhead was, however, protruding out of the opposite side as the bull ran away from us. A few minutes later, it was completely dark.

After waiting patiently for about half an hour, we took up the trail. There was plenty of blood and following the spoor was an easy task. Having tracked the bull for almost three hundred yards, we suddenly came upon it, less than thirty yards away. The bull was still standing, but it was obviously really sick as it did not see or hear us approaching. I declined putting a second arrow into the bull fearing that it might spook and run for a long distance. I had already seen well-hit game do this before and was worried about this happening again. Furthermore, there was a bush in the flight path making the shot opportunity less than ideal. We decided that the best thing to do was back off quietly and return in the morning.

By first light, we were already out looking for the wildebeest. Being that it was the day of my departure, we had to be especially quick and efficient

in recovering the bull. We easily found the place where we had last seen the bull. There was a great deal of blood and some lung tissue as well at the spot where it had stood when we left the previous

evening. We followed the spoor from there and found the bull dead less than two hundred yards away. It was a very old and mature bull. My quest for a blue wildebeest had come to an exciting end with little time to spare.



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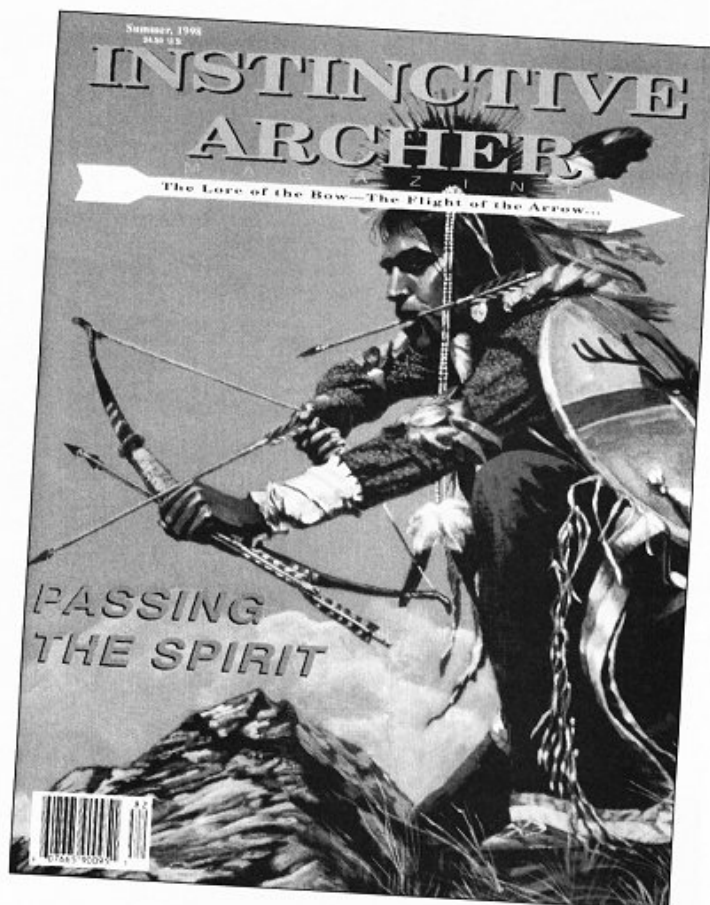
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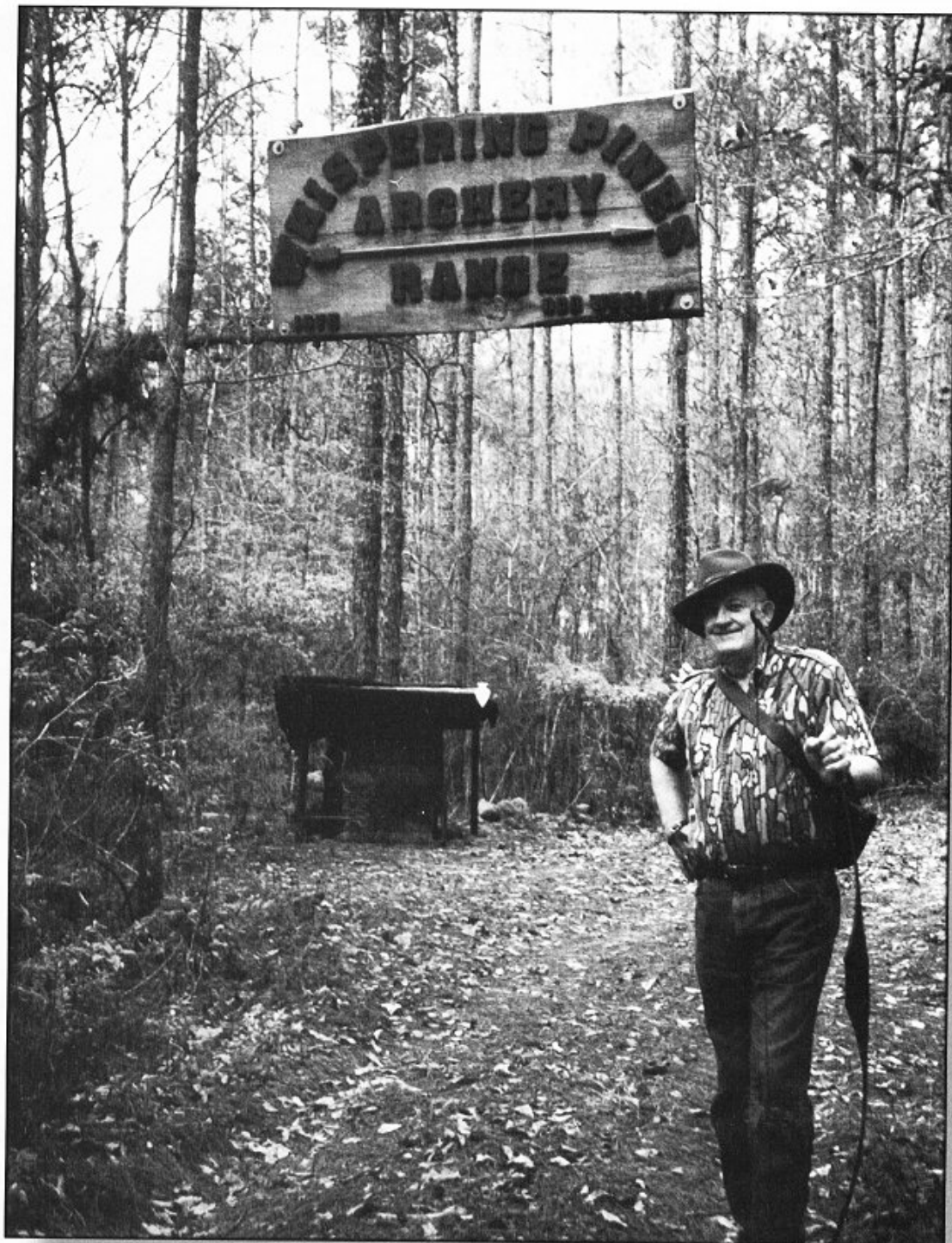
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## Arrows From The Sherwood Glen

by Bob Wesley

### Building a Traditional Range



Walley Renner braced his left foot against the post and with the other leg in a kneeling position signaled, "Let 'er go boys." The rope was released and the 3-d boar sailed down the cable toward Renner at high speed. Drawing his arrow to anchor, Walley released. Whack—the arrow appeared in the boar's left frontal chest section to score ten points.

From the charging boar, Walley and his shooting companions moved around the beautifully wooded traditional range. Whispering Pines Traditional Range is a twenty-five-year-old, fifteen-target range which features most of the familiar 3-D animal targets. It is however, unique in several respects. All but two of the 3-D animals are backed up by alfalfa hay bales which are covered with a plywood shelter type top. This is done to prevent arrow loss and once the archer has shot several targets he finds that it doesn't take away from the aesthetics of the range.

Photo: Bob Wesley at the entrance to his 25-year-old archery range. His smile belies the difficult challenges awaiting therein.



Bob likes to set his targets up with hay backstops and a plywood cover to protect them from the weather. In addition to reducing arrow loss, it extends the life of the bales and the targets.



To increase the training realism, this running deer target is set up to be shot from both a ground stand and a tree stand.

The lay-out of the range is that of a figure 8 with a pavilion in the center of the "8." This allows the archer to shoot eight targets and stop for a refreshing drink and a sit-down break, then to proceed to shoot the front seven. All targets are double staked so that a complete round consists of 15 white stakes and 15 red stakes. The white staked positions are more open and longer whereas the red staked positions are closer but tighter shots (through the brush, true hunting situation shots).

One interesting target features a shot up hill at a lion perched twelve feet up in a tree (to miss this one is to lose an arrow). Another features a shot from a pit blind through a narrow window covered with camouflage cloth (this is the type shot featured in hunting African game over water holes).

There are two shots from elevated positions, one is at a deer which is walking (using a pulley cable set-up), the other is at a boar which charges towards the archer. By use of irregular terrain these shots are positioned so the archer does not lose his arrow if he misses.

When planning a traditional range, make use of a tract of land with lots of trees, rolling hill-type terrain and include a small creek if possible. I like at least eight acres for a fifteen-target range. The figure-8 layout is very conve-

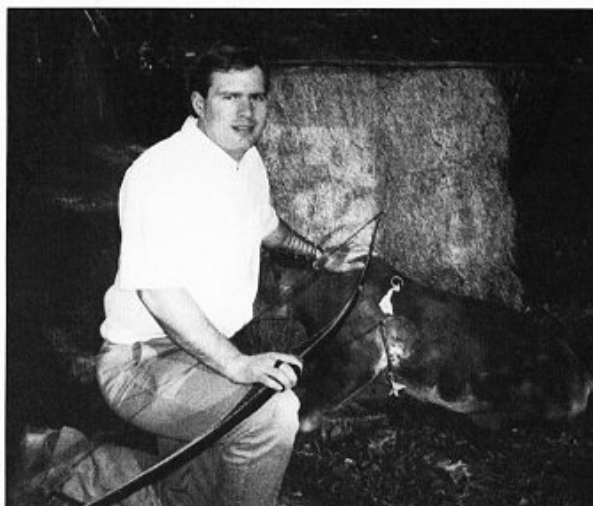
nient in that all archers begin and end the course at the club house or pavilion. Targets should be positioned to allow misses without endangering the shooters at the next target. Moving or specialized target set-ups add variety and promote the true traditional spirit of fun.

Materials required for back-up butts include two or three bales of alfalfa hay to be compressed with number 13 round wire and a tightening key (remember to twist into the loop when tightening), four landscape posts, a piece of one inch plywood (a 4 X 8 piece cut in half will make two cover tops, and some heavy tar paper to go over the plywood).

Target markers should be of iron to stand at least two feet high with an iron plate on top to number the target. These should be moved to different positions on a regular basis to keep the shots challenging and distances unknown.

Today's 3-D targets feature replaceable shoulders and are also "kit repairable" which makes a traditional range economi-

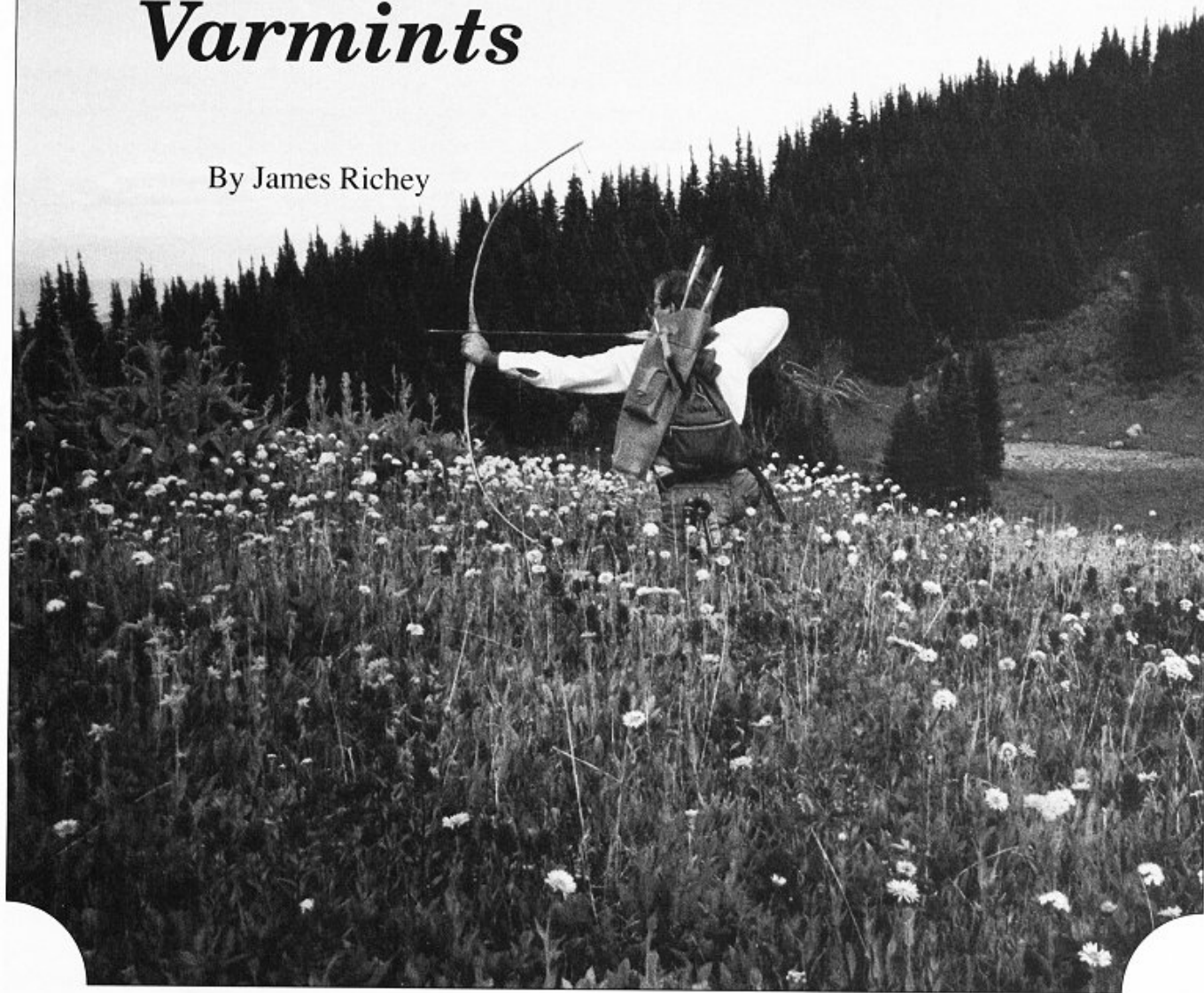
cally viable and our sport relatively inexpensive when compared to other recreational sports. What a fine way to enjoy the good fellowship and camaraderie of other traditional archers; say—meet you at the pavilion this Saturday at 2:00 for a round of 30 targets through the shady glen Whisperin' Pines.



Ricardo Longoria, one of many archers to travel to Whispering Pines for Bob Wesley's famous archery clinics, shoots a ten. Ricardo told IA staff that his shooting skills improved noticeably under Bob's tutelage. Shortly after this photo was taken, Ricardo arrowed a huge roan antelope in Africa—the new World Record.

# *High Country Varmints*

By James Richey



*M*ost hunters view varmint shooting as a long-range proposition entailing the use of high-power, small-bore rifles mounted with large scopes. A recent expedition to the alpine meadows of a 7,000-foot mountain in British Columbia, however, proved there are less noisy, more traditional ways to pursue small game. One day in mid-June, I joined a fellow archer on a trip up the back side of a ski area near where we live in Kamloops to see if we could account for a few ground squirrels with our longbows. It was Al's second sojourn into the area, so he knew not only the way in but also that we were likely to have good hunting. The mountain is normally deserted of people at this time of year, but the many flower-strewn meadows are home to thousands of arctic ground squirrels, also known simply as gophers.

Photo: Author Jim Richey draws his bow on one of British Columbia's mile-high gophers.

Kamloops is in the watershed of the Thompson River in B.C.'s Southern Interior. It's surrounded by dry-belt valleys of open or mixed grassland and forest below 3,000 feet, and alpine forest from around 6,000 feet. The area we planned to hunt is accessible only by a long, steep hike through dense forest, so the squirrels were more approachable than if they had been hunted extensively. The

great numbers of the animals also makes good hunting for the golden eagles that soar overhead, sharing their domain with those willing to make the climb. Coyotes, bear, and deer also enhance the un-sullied beauty of the area.

Snow still lay in the small canyons that fed the stream we followed into the alpine. We topped the ridge at the summit about 10 a.m. and were rewarded with a view of the small lake that sits at the bottom of the valley, reflecting the surrounding peaks. At first the only sign of the ground squirrels was the many openings to their burrows. As the sun became hotter, however, we began to hear the high-pitched whistles they use to communicate. Soon they were running all over the mountain.

The many compound shooters at our local club told Al and I that we would be wasting our time pursuing gophers with longbows, especially since we shoot instinctively. To be sure, there were many more clean misses than hits, but we both did a lot better than I had expected. After breaking several arrows, Al's Judo scored first. Squirrel number two was his as well. I had only switched to the longbow from a compound six months before, so when I neatly skewered number three, it was first blood for the 55-pound Martin.

Having read Pope, Hill, and others, I knew the longbow had the necessary accuracy and power to connect at reasonable ranges, but the proof is in the pudding. As my first deer with a compound gave me a sense of accomplish-

ment I had never felt with a rifle, so too did that first critter with the bow of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors give me a sense of connection with them and the progenitors of modern archery. I felt I was on the threshold of sharing the experience of

ting for bow hunting than the high alpine, and the ground squirrel was as challenging a target as any I've found. Chasing up and down steep mountain slopes asks much of a hunter's legs and lungs. Shooting over boulders, around

trees and through tall grass demands the use of unconventional positions the still hunter can use to good advantage during deer and bear seasons. A little summer varmint hunting will stand any hunter in good

**A little summer varmint hunting will stand any hunter in good stead when that shot at an eight-point mule deer buck presents itself.**

"hunting the hard way" with the Thompsons, Art Young, and those other practitioners of Toxophilus.

The lake at the top of the mountain sits in the center of a bowl not unlike that found on old volcanos. The granite peaks accounted for many broken arrows. But there can be no more beautiful set-

stead when that shot at an eight-point mule deer buck presents itself.

As the morning progressed, Al and I split up so as to exhibit the least apparent menace to all those alert and watchful eyes. We agreed to meet for lunch on a promontory overlooking the lake, then set off up separate small val-

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Stalking elusive ground squirrels, just one of the many benefits of spending a day afield in British Columbia.

leys. Every now and then I would catch sight of Al's broadly grinning, sun-burned face as he was taking a shot or retrieving an arrow. He looked completely absorbed and happy in his work. Every archer has a bit of kid in him, and stalking gophers is sure, I found out early in the day, to bring this out as perhaps no other endeavor could.

Rejoining one another for sandwiches and coffee made over a small fire, we found that we each had half-a-dozen of the little critters to our credit.

Actually, Al was one up on me, but I was determined not to be outdone, so we returned to the fray after lunch with renewed vigor.

As the sun went down behind the peaks to the west, I started back to our lunch spot. An immature eagle, with its characteristic banded tail, came sailing over my head and snatched a squirrel from its front door a couple of hundred yards down the mountain. Absolutely nothing could have served as a more fitting end to the day's hunt. There exists a

strong bond between hunters and the other predators we share the field with, and I couldn't help but wonder if in some other incarnation that eagle and I had not known each other better.

As Al and I regrouped, we found that we had each restricted ourselves to a dozen squirrels. Even though the population of the small rodents seemed limitless, we both felt a responsibility to limit our kills. After all, the coyotes, eagles, and other animal predators count on that same larder for their livelihood, and it seems that archers as a matter of course take to the field more for the hunt than the kill. As the philosopher Carlos Ortega y Gasset said, while the kill is necessary to the hunt, it is not the end in itself.

Turning down the mountain in the early dark of evening, I thought I heard laughing voices behind me. Glancing back, I was startled for an instant by what looked like Saxton and Art walking along a few yards behind, but I guess it was just shadows cast by the moon.



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# Elk Camp

By Pam Edwards

**A**fter a long day of mountainous hunting, sleep comes quickly.

I wake in the night to a gentle shaking. "*Listen. . . do you hear that?*" I roll over onto my back and open tired eyes. The fire in our lodge is almost out now but the glowing coals still cast shadows against the canvas walls. I can see the stars out the top of the lodge, and the poles that make up our frame seem to reach the heavens.

"*Hear what?*" "*Shhh. . . listen.*" The wind was blowing. . . it seemed to make the walls of the lodge breathe in and out, in and out. And then I heard him—not a bugle, but a deep throaty bark. I had never heard a bull elk make that sound before. He barked again, and then the cows answered.

1—2—3, we didn't know how many cows there were. My husband whispered, "*He's moving his herd through.*" Occasionally we could hear a calf answering his mama's call, not wanting to be left behind on such a blustery night.

We lay there listening, very content and comfortable, it was 4 a.m. and we knew we would be getting up soon. Maybe we could track the herd, get our shot, take home our elk, but if we couldn't, it really didn't matter, because lying there in our lodge, the warmth of my husband next to me, the sound of the wind, the life of the elk just outside our camp, made the entire hunting trip worthwhile, and I lay there thinking life just doesn't get much better than this.



Kim and Pam Edwards' lodge nestled in the tall timber of beautiful Oregon.

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*With  
Bob Martin*

I would like your indulgence for a moment to speak to you as a free citizen of these United States on a serious matter of the gravest importance. This country now stands on the threshold of a new millennium, and yet we also stand ever closer to the loss of all that we hold dear at the core of our existence as the greatest nation and bastion of freedom that has ever had the grace to exist under God's blue sky. We stand tottering on the brink of an abyss where liberty and the inalienable rights endowed by our Creator could be swept aside by the political cancer of liberalism, whose hidden agenda of power and control "from the cradle to the grave" seeks to usher in the New World Order of fascio-socialism.

The sounds of jack boots in the night dragging people away and trampling democracy—was that the SS in WWII, or Janet Reno in Florida? Tanks smashing a home and citizens being put to the torch—was that Kosovo or Janet Reno in Waco, Texas? The Clinton-Gore administration, the lords of smoke and mirrors, the masters of spin and sin, have demonstrated lawless abuse of office and power for long enough.

Many citizens have become so demoralized by the popularized liberal dogma that is pounded into them from preschool to college, that they have simply ceased to voice their opinions or participate in the political arena. The liberals preach "celebrate diversity," but their actions say, "As long as your beliefs are identical to ours."

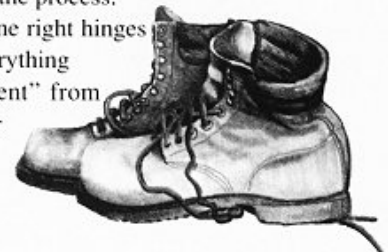
They wave the banner of tolerance, but refuse to tolerate anyone who disagrees with their liberal socialist New Age philosophy. The Clinton-Gore administration was thrust to power by a vocal, one-sided media that represents a minority of voters. Most people I have spoken to that supported Clinton-Gore stated they did it because they liked the way they looked and communicated. I asked them if they listened to what was said, the response was shocking! They said they voted for Clinton and Gore because they seemed competent, capable, and intelligent—their philosophy and beliefs were given no weight or consideration! They looked good, consumer politicians. Other people stayed away from the polls en masse.

Our society is not and was not prepared to use a backbone in dealing with rampant tyranny in our highest office. The United States' presidency was never intended to be held by an enemy of the Constitution, and so the checks and balances and numbed confusion of the people and the embarrassment of those who helped place them in power have been overwhelmed by the Clinton-Gore arrogance and politics of intimidation.

I am old enough to remember Khrushchev saying to the American public, "We will bury you!" Khrushchev is dead, the Soviet Union is no more, communism is said to be all but gone (don't tell China and North Korea), but the socialist politics in the agenda of liberal fascists have found no better friend than the Clinton Gore administration. They have an agenda not only to bury your freedom, but also the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. God save us from the autocrats on the U.S. Supreme Court who rule our nation with absolute unlimited authority and no accountability!

The last true deterrent that protects a free nation from governmental tyranny is "the right of the people to keep and bear arms..." so said Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers. As American citizens, the Fourth Amendment guarantees we also have the right to be safe and secure in our homes. This is impossible without a firearm to protect you from the lawless, criminal predators who otherwise would not fear knocking down your door, they don't because they are afraid they will get their heads blown off in the process.

The armed citizen is the chief cornerstone of any free society, upon this one right hinges every other freedom! Were it not for the men and women who sacrificed everything for the fundamental principles and truths they believed were "self evident" from Lexington and Concord to the beaches of Normandy and Pearl Harbor, your



freedom, your liberty, your right to speak your mind (free speech), our freedom to print this article (freedom of the press), your freedom to practice your religion and to pursue your happiness, would not exist.

Were it not for these principles you as a bowhunter would very likely be an outlaw shooting the King's deer in Sherwood Forest and thus be hung by your own bowstring!

Virtually all modern progress in civil rights across the world has been brought about by American ideals and principles, and we have literally drug the rest of the world along with us, kicking and screaming. And they still scream "Down with the NRA!" They recognize the National Rifle Association as the only effective coalition of common free citizens in the entire world that has managed to successfully stave off the liberal New World Order's agenda of dismantling our democracy, our personal freedom, and the U.S. Constitution.

They seek to impose their will by removing the "lynch pin" of the Second Amendment. This nation is despised and criticized by every socialist government and Banana Republic who hopes to rule us into oblivion and subjugate us under the United Nations (whom Bill Clinton has a love affair with). They shudder at the thought of the power of personal liberty in the hands of free men! God save us from the United Nations!

The erosion of liberty has happened all over the globe under our noses for the last 25, 50, and 100 years, on every continent, in every tongue. Why do we believe that it is impossible to ever happen here to us (again), are we so arrogant? We have been lulled to sleep by familiarity

and have taken for granted the liberties that were purchased with the blood of patriots.

England, Canada, Australia—all "Common Wealth" countries—have lost nearly all of their firearms rights. England, who is always held up as a model of liberal socialistic success, has banned the personal possession of firearms, and my friend, hunting—with a gun or bow—is a lost and derided concept there.

Australia's recent gun confiscation has resulted in a flood tide of person-to-person crime, as criminals walk undeterred into private homes to have their way without fear of an armed resident ending their mayhem.

Canada mindlessly follows suit. To the horror of her citizens, the liberal socialists have usurped their rights and they now have given gun owners a choice, "give it up or become a criminal." So says King George.

I am a parole officer by trade, and let me tell you my friends, gun control is not crime control, it is control, period. It is already illegal for felons to own guns, it is already illegal to commit a crime with a gun. Criminals don't care—drugs and guns are traded and sold in the drug world like stocks on Wall Street. Law-abiding citizens registering their firearms and being licensed to own them serves only one purpose: the government will know who owns what and where! When it comes time to confiscate, the knock will be on your door. Bows and arrows will be in the fine print, listed under "restricted weapons and destructive devices." Believe it, the writing is on the wall. Unless we turn the tide, we will be swept away by it.

We stand as Americans in the cross-roads of time, the politics of the New World Order, and it's "New Dark Age" domination through the United Nations (which has already been deeded America's national parks). November 7th, 2000, will either be the election which sets to right the injustice of the current Clinton-Gore administration, or

we will seal our fate to pass shamefully into the midst of despair as we continue down the path of socialism and moral decay that this administration represents.

We must put an end to their "High crimes and misdemeanors," and America must shake off the hypnotic brainwashing of a one-sided, liberal media that relentlessly pushes its New Age socialism and propaganda on a populace shamed into lock-step for fear they will be ridiculed as homo-phobic, racist, sexist, chauvinistic, or God forbid—the owner of an S.U.V.

Elect a President and a Congress that will uphold the Constitution, not trample it. Vote! If you are not registered, register—it is your sacred duty as an American.

Join the NRA and let your voice be heard. No one else is fighting so effectively for your rights, no one! Without the NRA, your right to own a firearm would have been abolished years ago, along with many other rights. Oppose the insidious political darkness creeping upon our land.

As Benjamin Franklin once wrote: "Indeed we must all hang together, otherwise we shall most assuredly hang separately," (by our bowstrings I might add).

Stand proudly with Charleton Heston as he waves his muzzle loader over his head and shouts, "From my cold dead hands!"



Robert Martin, Assistant Editor  
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and supporter of the  
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