

STICKTALK



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STICKTALK

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DEADLINES

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Editors' Point

By Ms. Caroline and Bub

It seems that every time we pen a new version of the Editor's Point, we are moving past some activity and looking forward to the next big event. The process is never mundane though the effort becomes familiar. This is the life of the longbow enthusiast in the Great Lakes Region. This is simply what we do. For us here on the farm, the fall hunting season is behind us and the Kalamazoo Expo and Winter Awards Banquet loom in the near future. When you belong to an active club like the Michigan Longbow Association, there is always something to look forward to. There always seems to be something happening. That is the way it should be. If it is not that way for you, then you are not as involved as we need you to be. This is a great organization with lots of things to do. Come join in the fun. Get active and let's go!!!

Bub and I did not kill a white-tail during the archery season. The warmer than normal temperatures kept us out of the woods much of the fall. We did however see a lot of turkey and deer this year with opportunities to harvest on several occasions. Bub had bucks within feet of his stand a couple of times but could not seal the deal. I, too, had deer close enough for a shot, but the angles never seemed to develop so I did not drop the string. We did do some "grocery shopping" during the firearm season and both of us scored on bucks. We are grateful for the meat and hope to add one more deer to the larder before the late season ends.

This issue of STICKTALK is an exciting issue for us. It has a great number of writers and subject matter to please the most discriminating reader. From hunting harvests to human interest the literary cuisine contained in this edition will tickle your pallet. Good stuff, all of it!

Here at the beginning of the New Year, we are hoping that you will determine to support your favorite archery organization by participating in most, if not all, the things that we do. The local shoots, camping shoots, volunteer outreach programs and STICKTALK contributions will keep you busy the year round. Your experience, and thus your enjoyment, will grow as will your circle of archery friends. Shoot, eat, camp with us, and soon you will come to understand what we mean in that there are no strangers, only friends that you haven't met yet.

Your chance to be involved is coming up very quickly at the Kalamazoo Expo where the MLA will again be sponsoring a children's shooting area. We need lots of bodies to help man the booth and blow up balloons. Consider spending the night and helping out for a couple of days. There are lots of friendships made over a cup of coffee and dinner after the show closes. Then there will be the Winter Awards Banquet. There will be a lot of activities to tend to on that night, and we can use your help to accomplish them. Come on out and share with us.

As you walk the longbow path, shoot lots of pictures and write about your experiences with the stick and string. Send them to STICKTALK and get ready, because we'll make you famous.



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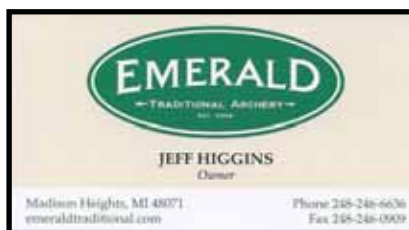
by Nick Viau

By the time you read this, the holidays will have come and gone and 2017 will be in full swing. What an exciting time of year this is! Everything and everyone is starting fresh, including your Council, which already has two new faces.

The first is Steve Chappell who will be serving as our new Treasurer. He replaced Peter Collins in December and is already doing a fantastic job. Peter had been training Steve to replace him since his arrival on Council in the spring and was so confident in his abilities and progress that he decided to step aside and let Steve take the reins early to avoid any banquet confusion.

Peter was a wonderful treasurer. He did a fantastic job in the most thankless position on Council and never complained once about it. He was also an integral component renewing our 501c3 status. I don't think we could've done it as quickly without his number crunching and persistence. Peter truly loves this organization and he will be missed. He has assured us he is in the pocket whenever we need him, and Council is grateful for that. Please thank him when you see him. The organization owes him a great deal of thanks. And please welcome Steve to the fold as well. The MLA is successful because people like Steve step up when needed.

Our second is Jamey Burkhead, who was voted in to an empty Council seat by Council last November.



Jamey has been a valuable member for some time. He has been at all of our outreach events and pitches in at the GLLI, Spring Shoot, Expo, etc. whenever needed. He loves the MLA and is one

of the most dependable people I know. He is going to be an excellent addition in 2017 and going forward.



The Council will undergo further changes during this year's election cycle as well. As mentioned previously, I will be stepping down in May to spend more time with my young family. Vice President John Buchin has expressed interest in taking my place and I can think of no better candidate to do so at this time. He works very hard, has an intimate understanding of the MLA's inner-workings, and brings a simple platform any member would get behind.

That being said, John is the only candidate that has shown interest. If you have had previous Council experience and feel you would like to run for President, Vice President, or another position, you will need to submit a letter of intent to the board/membership by our Spring STICKTALK deadline of March 1, 2017, so that it can be published and reviewed by the membership before the May meeting. The same process applies if you wish to serve as a Council member, but previous Council experience is not necessary to fulfill that role. If you have questions or concerns, please ask a Council member.

But before all that business, the Kalamazoo Expo is next on the docket. We will be there, doing our thing, all three days (January 27-29). This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with us and spread the love of the longbow. Even if you're only there for a short time, please come by and see us. It's a great opportunity to renew your membership, secure a vendor booth for the GLLI, or purchase MLA merchandise.

Lastly, don't forget to get your tickets for the Winter Banquet on February 11. You can buy your tickets online at www.michiganlongbow.org/winter-banquet or by sending payment to Steve Chappell (address available on the front cover).

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! Longbows Forever!

Michigan Longbow Association

2017 Winter Banquet

The Michigan Longbow Association's Winter Awards Banquet will once again be held at the Woodshire Banquet Hall in Fowlerville, Michigan on February 11, 2017. The doors will open for fellowship at 4 pm and dinner will start at 6 pm. This MLA event is always an exciting activity for attendees and has sold out many times in the past. To prevent anyone from being left out, we have arranged for more seating at Woodshire this year—225 seats will be available for this extravaganza allowing more of those who want to attend to be present on this special night.

Tickets are available online at the MLA website, www.michiganlongbow.org and of course by U.S. Mail Service. If you are paying by check, please make the check payable to "Michigan Longbow Association." Send it to the MLA Assistant Treasurer Steve Chappell, 2421 Rowley Road, Williamston, MI 48895.

Many of our MLA faithful have asked that tickets be available for purchase at the Kalamazoo Expo. While we cannot guarantee there will be tickets left at that late date, we certainly will make them available if there are. We have also delayed ticket sales until the first of December in hopes that there will be some tickets left for those desiring to purchase them at the Kalamazoo Expo or by mail. Again please understand this is no guarantee that there will be tickets left so do not delay. Tickets go fast.

We are trying something new this year that will provide the MLA membership with yet another discount perk. There will be members, (and immediate family) tickets for \$20 and non-member tickets that will sell for \$25. The non-member price is much closer to the actual price that Woodshire charges the MLA for each plate at the banquet, while the membership price of \$20 is truly a discount. Don't forget to designate your ticket preference when ordering as this option will be monitored in reference to the membership roster. It pays to be a member of the Michigan Longbow Association! You will not

receive a paper ticket, but you will receive confirmation upon payment. Your seating packet will be given to you upon your arrival at the banquet.

Remember that the banquet is for fellowship and to honor your MLA peers. So don't forget to send in your registration for the Big Game Awards. The MLA Winter Awards Banquet is also one of only two fundraising events for this organization each year. The MLA is more active now than it has ever been and depends solely on the generosity of its members. So please remember to bring your raffle and auction items. The Michigan Longbow Association is a 501(3)C, so your contributions are tax deductible.

There are contests on banquet night, too! We invite you to create a dessert dish to pass. There is a special table where you will be able to share your dessert with the banquet attendees. You may even like to enter the Winter Banquet Dessert Contest. Cash prizes will be paid for the first three finishers. We also will have an arrow-making contest: three identical arrows made by you to be judged, with cash prizes given for the top three finishers. All contest arrows are then auctioned off. So if you want them back, you'll have to buy them!

The Michigan Longbow Association is thriving because of the vibrant energy of its membership. Take the time to share with your friends on this special evening. ➔



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Nostalgia

By Heather Alishia Williams

To walk through the woods would be such sweet heaven at a time like now. I can see it clearly. The slope of the mountain pulls at my calves. My breath is short. It feels more glorious than I could have ever thought possible. The crunch of the pine needles and leaves beneath my feet are better than music. The crisp cool air upon my face, I can almost *feel* my cheeks turning rosy. How healthy I must look! I stop and turn and everywhere I look, all I can see is fresh...green...alive...rhapsody. Nature has never been so splendid. I inhale and my lungs expand further than they ever could in a city. I close my eyes and I hear the woodland creatures scurrying about. Off in the distance I can here branches snapping, elk, deer or some other animal making its way. They've no doubt smelled or heard my approach. I continue on up. Patches of snow. Skies so blue you'd get

lost in them. The trees ~ I miss the trees. I miss the sounds of the river cutting through the valley. I miss dirt roads that are so old they were begun by the animals migrating for winter. I miss the solitude. And I miss the familiarity found in such places. Places that judge you for what you accomplish and nothing else. I hate the thought of opening my eyes to the harsh reality of my world. It would be so easy to continue to fantasize about where I belong instead of where I have ended up. But, there is still hope.

The heart of the archer beats in my chest now, focused on the goal, the target. My distant mountains are moving closer and closer. Soon, the trappings of urban life shall wilt away and be replaced by the assured comforts of home. With this thought in mind, I'll nock another arrow...focus...draw...

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Kalamazoo Expo


If you have been around the Michigan Longbow Association for any time at all, you will have noticed that this organization moves from one event to the next in rapid order. The only time we slow down is during the hunting season, and then we check on one another or share hunting camps as we pursue game in the out-of-doors. As the hunting season winds down, two major events loom ahead as the doldrums of winter set in. One is fondly referred to as the "Kazoo Expo." The other is the MLA Winter Awards Banquet. In this, the winter edition of STICKTALK magazine, we have devoted some space to the banquet but feel there should be some information for the new members about what to expect at the Expo.

The brain child of the Brumm family, the Expo is an event that brings together all things trad in the archery world today. Held in the Expo Center at the Kalamazoo County Fairground in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on January 27, 28, 29, 2017, this event brings a bright spot to the sometimes dismal Midwest winter. The price is a one-time payment of \$10 and is good for all weekend. Children 12 and under are free.

You can expect to find vendors that specialize in products made specifically for the traditional archer: bow and arrow building supplies, quivers, clothing, and other equipment. There will be bowyers aplenty. You can pick up that new reflex/deflex longbow you have always wanted to try and go shoot it at the practice area. You will meet the folks who will build your new custom bow, and talk with them and discuss your needs and preferences. If you are on a budget, there is a large booth for used bows that may be just what you've been looking for. You will see displays of bowhunting items, broadheads and famous archery collections. You will have the opportunity to attend

seminars and workshops that will enhance your traditional archery experience. Shooting, self-bow building, sinew backing, flint knapping, string making, and much more. There will even be wine tasting and an indoor 3D shoot!

As always, there is the Michigan Longbow Association's kids' shooting area where the young, and not so young, can learn to shoot a longbow. We will be selling MLA memberships, banquet tickets, and merchandise. We always welcome members to come and spend some time volunteering at the booth! Helping blow up some balloons and shaking some hands will give you a greater sense of belonging, and you will no doubt enjoy the new friends you will make.

More information can be found at GNQCO.com. We'll see you there! 

2017 SHOOT SCHEDULE

JANUARY 15 - POLAR BEAR

FEBRUARY 19 - MIXED GAME

MARCH 19 - ALASKAN WILDERNESS

APRIL 23 - PREHISTORIC

MAY 20 & 21 - TRADITIONAL WEEKEND
COMPOUND SHOOTERS WELCOMED

JUNE 3 & 4 -
WORLD DRAGON SHOOTING DAY

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AUGUST 20 - ELK AND MOULEY

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Ladies, We've Come a Long Way (Archery: Not Just For The Fellas!)

By Heather Alishia Williams

Whether a goddess of mythology, an ancient Scythian queen, a historical 12th century Samurai warrior, an early 20th century Olympian or today's modern woman...longbows have been mastered by the female hand since the first blade stripped the first cut of wood.

The Roman goddess Diana and her Greek counterpart, Artemis, have been well established as archers: hunts-women. But another goddess has reigned over the hearts of men longer still. Skadi (sometimes Skaoi) is a Norse giantess and goddess known for her bow-hunting. She's also the goddess associated with skiing, winter and the mountains.

Once believed to be a myth, the Scythian (aka Amazons) have been established as really living based on archeological findings. They were small tribes that lived a nomadic life, with evidence they roamed from the Black Sea to Mongolia. Many false rumors have been told throughout history. Ancient Greeks speculated that Amazon societies were only female and that the warrior women would cut off one of their breasts to make themselves deadlier with their bow. These both have been disproved with evidence from burial sites. One-third of the women buried had weapons, especially bows and arrows in quivers. Many suffered from battle injuries like the men, but none have shown evidence of self-mutilation. The Scythian bow is smaller and more powerful than other contemporary bows.

Tomoe Gozen was a 12th century female Samurai warrior who has become subject of many works of art, literature and theater. One of the first references to her is in the historical retelling, *The Tale of the Heike*. The monk who authored it writes, "She was also a remarkably strong archer.", "...a mighty bow; and she performed more deeds of valor than any of his other warriors." Because of her archery skills and her displays of courage, she was "appointed as leading commander in the Genpei War."

Sybil "Queenie" Newall still holds the record as the oldest female individual gold medalist. In the 1908 Summer Olympics, held in London, at age 53, she made history. *It all started when she joined her local archery club in 1905*. During the next two years, she won multiple regional championships, and after the 1908 Olympics, she went on to win National Championships in 1911, 1912 and 1914.

This brings us to you and I...the modern women. With society telling us we can do it all and history telling us it's been done before, where does that leave you? In a pretty good spot actually. You have within your reach everything you need to achieve your goals (dreams?) when you grasp the grip of your longbow and nock an arrow. As modern female archers, we can compete, learn or simply relax behind the string. You've taken the first step...joining the MLA.





Jack and Jesse Forever

by John May

My grandparents were typical of grandparents. Having been married for sixty-five years when my grandmother Jesse passed, my Pop, as I called him, spoke often and fondly of my grandmother. Their love for one another was clearly an example of what a devoted marriage should be. It was during the rough times in my life that memories of our relationship were a rock to which my ship could moor, when the stormy seas of youth sent me crashing about the waves. I began kicking around the idea of a tribute bow. I had read of them on some of the forums and how folks would even pass them around to hunt and shoot. It was on the hearth of my imagination where a fire was lit to have such a longbow built.

Having fallen in love with the straight-ended longbow, along with being of English descent, I thought it proper and fitting to combine my love and a bit of my ancestry in the form of a fine hunting bow. Having owned several Howard Hill bows, I excitedly contacted Craig Ekin (Owner

and head bowyer of Howard Hill Archery) and asked him to build me a bow at 70 inches, one that would draw around 60 at 28. The Redman was perfect in that it boasted yew, and to contrast the dark red color of that historical wood, I selected ebony for the riser.

After I received the bow, I treated it like any other new bow. With the right arrows, I'd shoot it to the point of soreness. She was so smooth at 70 inches that I argued with some folks when they would talk about how rough a Hill style can be to shoot. Perhaps I was prejudiced because of the bow's name and "lineage." Many a night after a full day of shooting, Gilbert could be found leaning against a chair in our living room with the swagger of a long tall cowboy in a dusty saloon. Because of the reasons I stated above, regarding Jack and Jesse, the bow became an emotional tonic if you will. When shooting it, I would converse with my grandparents, speaking in the language of the Heart. All of our walks with a quiver full of stumping

arrows, surrounded by falling leaves, found me gaining more confidence each day; and funny as it sounds, it was there in those woods, firing judos, that all three of us had a stake in how well I was going to master this bow. All I had to do was glance down at the belly and read the inscription "Gilbert" and I would absorb the presence of my grandparents. Gilbert was the surname of many an archer in the Scottish battle rolls, and I most assuredly had to do this bow, along with my ancestry, justice. That bow and I had to live up to the legacy of the name, Gilbert.

I had made the decision to take any adult deer. Buck or doe, it mattered not. I simply wanted to blood this longbow with an adult whitetail. October 1 came and went, and nothing sauntered in to shoot at. A few more evening hunts and nothing eventful, other than busy red squirrels bickering and the occasional grouse strolling by to occupy my time.

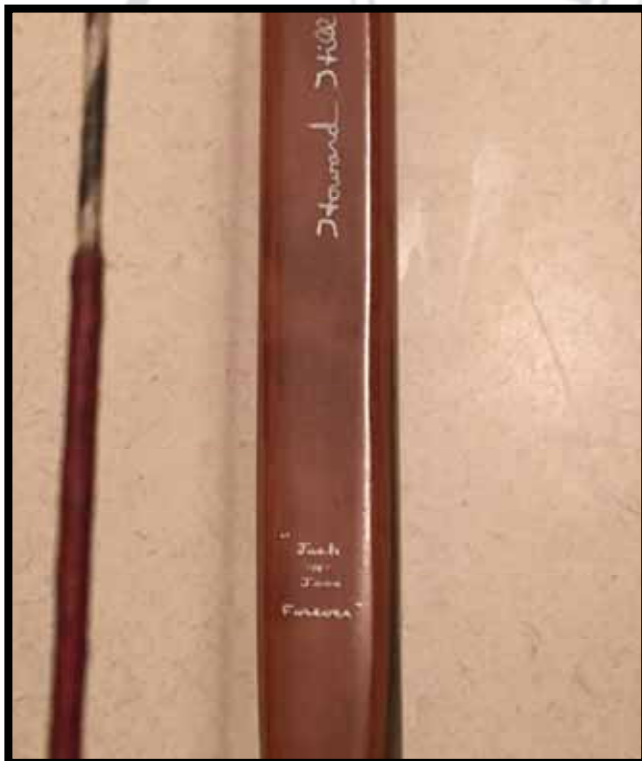
On October 23 I headed to my favorite stand. It was a pine tree with a great view into the winter wheat which borders a set of hardwoods that make their way in a lazy line to the Cass River. After settling in, I scanned the area



for any new buck sign. All was quiet, except the sounds of the birds and their fall going-ons. Then came the sha-shonk, sha-bomp, rhythm of a whitetail's meandering walk towards me. What appeared was a thick, dark doe, probably 2 years old, intent on using her nose to lift up the brown, dry leaves that were the previous spring's splendor. The problem in my mind was the quiet nature of tonight's sit. The birds suddenly had shut down their imitation of a garage stomp band, leaving my every move potentially a hunt ending in error. The doe now was looking around as if she heard something out of place in the wheat field. She then took a step and her head was behind a small maple. What happened next is all too familiar to longbowmen and women, centuries old. The string came back, the familiar touch of my finger to my mouth's corner and away the bright arrow went. The 5.5 white shield cut fletches spun like a buzzsaw until they connected with the ducking doe, amid ships. She mule kicked and was away and outta sight in just a few seconds. I quietly sat down with my bow across my lap. We all know that feeling that washes over us like a

warm bath after a day of cutting wood in the cold, the feeling that your arrow was perfect, satisfaction like no other. The practice, obsessive fidgeting with broadheaded arrows, for a perfect flight, and the day dreaming of such a shot, bathed in the soul-lifting emotion that such endeavors lead to. I leaned back against the smooth barked tree and closed my eyes. At once, it was 1968. In slow motion, the warmth of my grandparents love enveloped me. I was sitting between them as we traveled home from one of my summer Little League games, eating melting ice cream and laughing. I envisioned them both, smiling at me, and proud. I opened my eyes, and as I did as a single tear fell. Now it was time to claim the precious doe. The trail was easy, and at the end of a short, albeit sweet walk, there she lay. I raised my hand which held the longbow Gilbert, like Rocky, and looked skyward. "We did it," I whispered, "We finally did it."

To say Jack and Jesse forever, was an appropriate wordage on the bow would be an un-



derstatement. They are gone from this earth, and long after I am also gone, a small piece of we three will remain in the form of a hunting longbow. I can only hope that someone will look down at the name and the wording on the longbow and wonder of its history. Hopefully, like all of us bowmen and women, they will assume it was a meaningful one. Gilbert still hunts with me often. Every Christmas, it leans against the family tree. My children know its importance and someday they too will carry it. The intent is that after I am gone, my name will be painted on the bow, as will the name of the previous owner and so on. Life doesn't have to end at death, and longbows can play a big part in that promise.

John and his wife Shari of 26 years live in Davison, MI. John enjoys spending time bowhunting with the stick, fishing, and riding his Harley. He has been in the excavation business since returning from the Navy. They have one daughter who is an RN.



This Could Only Happen To Me!

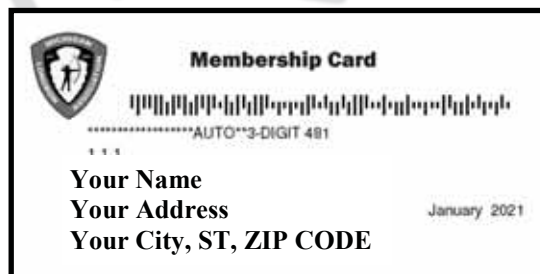
by Denny Shattuck

Well ok, here goes. I went out one early afternoon and moved my treestand to a different tree just 5 yards away. Different angle, just thought it would work better. I threw out some carrots and I'm thinking I'm ready now!!! Went back up to the house and two hours later headed for the hunt...I hooked my bow up to my pull line and climbed into the stand. I went to hook up my harness and, "Oh Crap! I forgot to take the harness strap off the other tree." I turned and sure enough, there it was still on the other tree. What do I do now?? I thought I had an extra strap on the ratchet strap so I tied it to that thinking that would work for now. I pulled up my bow and turned around and there he was standing 10-15 yards in front of the stand. Nice little 6 point. I know I was not being very stealthy...couldn't believe he didn't hear or see me. So there I was, no glove, no arrow knocked...so as quiet as I could I knock an arrow and he's still coming in. I'm thinking this is going to be interesting. So I'm as ready as I'm gonna get. I waited for a clear shot and let her fly. Yes I hit him! I thought it was a decent shot. I watched as he ran off and stopped about 50-60 yards away. So I waited thinking, "Drop, drop." But no, he moved to the right and disappeared. I sat there for 15-20 minutes and climbed down from the stand and headed in

that direction. No blood but I knew where he went. Sure enough, there was my arrow on the other side of the creek. With all the rain the creek was up, so how was I gonna get across? I knew there was an old bridge just down a ways so I headed for it. It looked safe enough so I stepped out in faith. Wrong!!! The thing broke and into the cold water I went, face first! A perfect belly flopper! With as much dignity as I could muster I pulled myself out, soaked to the bone. But I'm thinking I would at least have a nice little buck to show for it. I got to my arrow and it was broken with good blood, so I started to look for a blood trail. Nothing!! I walked back and forth in the direction he went. Nothing!!! So I went back to where I found my arrow and started again, still nothing!! I'm standing there soaked and wet thinking how am I gonna get back across the creek? Sure wasn't going back the way I came, so I started walking the creek looking for a shallower place to cross. Then to add insult to injury, down I went again! I tripped over some barbed wire and ripped a hole in my boot. Man, this is just getting better and better. Well I found a shallow spot and headed across. Now I'm soaked and have a boot full of water. I sloshed back to the jeep and headed home thinking this will be a very funny story someday. But not today!!

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The MLA keeps growing at an exciting rate! To keep pace, new innovations were instituted at the 2016 MLA Spring Shoot and Membership Meeting. You will be happy to know that your membership is now calculated on a quarterly basis, giving the member and the membership secretary a more accurate date of renewal. Please refer to your STICKTALK mailing label as it is actually your new membership card! No more waiting for a response or



looking for your card. It has the pertinent information already on it including your date of renewal. So, cut the mailing label off your copy of STICKTALK (or bring the entire magazine), stick it in your wallet, and you will be ready to flash your ID for

MLA discounts at all our MLA functions. Congratulations on being a member of the greatest longbow organization in the nation! Welcome to the Michigan Longbow Association!



Second Chances are Awesome

By Rob Jones

Our annual gathering of friends for the love of a longbow started out three years ago with just a couple of guys and grew from there. This year, as usual, a lot of food was consumed and a little hunting ensued. I started out this time by going to a piece of private property that I was given permission to hunt last year. It's the same property where our very own prez, Nick Viau, harvested his first buck with a longbow. I was able to hunt there again after lending a hand to the landowner with some odds and ends to help keep his property up: fixed his log splitter, fixed his kibitz tractor, no problems, man!

When we all got together, it was decided that only two of us were going to hunt there. Steve Viau and I were the lucky ones that day. I sat Steve down in a nice little draw with converging trails on it, then I continued on my way to the spot where Nick harvested last year.

I sat there most of the morning until it got light out. It was a very cool, crisp morning. The

frost was just starting to form. I believe that morning was the first frost of the season. Nice morning for the beginning of a little rut activity. It was pretty quiet for quite a while. Suddenly, I heard all kinds of rustling in the thicket behind me. There were some grunts and scurrying all over back and forth. I knew it was at least two deer. For some time, they ran around behind me. I got a text from Steve saying, "Man, just had a buck run past me just out of range. Keep an eye out." I text back, "I can hear. They are between us somewhere."

For about fifteen minutes these deer are running around behind me. Finally! Here comes a four-point running out of the thicket on my left. It turns a corner to a trail that is six yards away from me. He is breathing really hard and is drooling all over. I set up to take a shot and calm my nerves. Then, a six-point comes out from behind him. Same way, breathing hard and drooling, while standing on the same trail. I give up on the four-point and set up on the

six-point. It turns the corner and is twelve yards away. My fingers put tension on the string. I slowly start to pull back. He gets to six yards...*then*, all of the sudden, a *huge* eight-point comes out of the same spot! I turn towards the eight-point and he moves on to about fifteen yards. The six-point wanders off. I draw to anchor on the eight-point. He takes a few steps and is quartering away. I reach full draw and release the arrow. What a beautiful sight—watching that arrow. What wasn't beautiful, however, was I made the biggest mistake an archer can make. I aimed at the deer and not at a spot. Fortunately, the arrow sailed harmlessly left of the deer and I had a clean miss. Thank God for small favors. The buck kept walking and got out of there. Wish I would have just tried the shot on the six-point at six yards, but, that's hunting for you. We sat the remainder of that day. It ended being pretty uneventful. No other shots were taken.

The following weekend I went down to the same place with my brother. Hunting with my brother holds a special place in my heart. These are the times the best memories are made. Once again, I sat in Nick's spot and settled in for an evening hunt. We sat for about an hour. I heard some rustling coming from behind walking slowly towards me. I sat as still as possible and listened to this animal coming in for what felt like another hour. By the sound of it, it was getting really close. I looked slowly to my right. There was an opossum three feet away trying to crawl into the brush pile. I relax and the opossum slowly moves on his way. I sat for about another 30 minutes and I hear the same rustling on my right slowly coming towards me. Again, I sat still, just in case. I sat for about five minutes and could tell the animal is very close. I slowly turned my head. There was a doe three yards away, just on the other side of the small brush pile. She's walking slowly with another doe in chase. They both get behind the brush pile and I use the opportunity to stand up. Luckily, I shoot lefty so I don't have to turn. The doe continues to move forward and clears the brush pile. I slowly drew my bow and, as the doe starts to quarter away, I reach full draw, picking a spot right at the back of her ribs. I am concentrating so hard I don't realize



I've released my string. I watch as the arrow flies straight to where I was looking and enters just behind the rib, passing through the opposite shoulder, and flying into the ground. The deer twitches and starts to slowly walk about 40 yards away, its tail also twitching the whole time. Then the doe walks to my left, about 75 yards, directly onto the two-track we used to walk in on. She lays down in it and does not get back up. Man, I am exhilarated! I can't believe it! I thank God. Then I call my brother. He comes over and we walk to my doe and check her out. She's a wonderful deer. A yearling, but, I am very happy with her. I field dress her and carry her back to the truck.

I used my St. Joe River Torrent longbow: 53@28", 60" bow. I also used a Black Eagle vintage arrow made by Steve Angell at Simply Traditional. I used a two blade Herters single bevel 145 grain broadhead. I looked for my arrow that night for 20 minutes to no avail. Fortunately, I went back a few nights later and recovered my arrow. What an awesome time. That is what second chances are for.



Pinch Me, I Must be Dreaming!

by John McIntosh

Few animals we pursue stir up as much emotion as hunting black bear with archery gear. Some folks just seem to have a visceral fear of them, and the mere mention of hunting them with a bow has them looking at you like you have somehow lost your mind. The usual questions—are you going to have a backup guy with a rifle? Are you taking a rifle, too? Aren't you afraid of getting eaten yourself?

Now mind you, you have to consider the fact that you are hunting a very efficient predator that typically has a deep-rooted fear of humans. It's important to respect the animal, but I've never had any fear of any animal. Respect...yes. Fear...no. But back to bears—learning their habits, watching their body language, knowing they can be unpredictable, all plays into your mental preparation. But as with any animal, we cannot prepare for everything. Just when we think we have it all figured out, they humble us.

I haven't hunted bears in close to 20 years, having killed my first bear in Canada with a bow after several unsuccessful hunts. I always en-

joyed the remote country, those thick boreal forests of northern Ontario. It is truly wild country. I always did kind of a semi-guided hunt, where once the outfitter had baits going, we pretty much did everything else ourselves. I quit going up there after they did away with the spring bear hunt and after the way we were treated at the border on the way home.

I had 4 points stacked up for Michigan bear this year as the application period approached. I talked with my friend, Al, who lives in western Upper Peninsula in the Bergland Unit. Al said if I drew, he'd be happy to help me out. I really had no clue where to start, so I gladly accepted his offer. I applied for the first hunt, and the wait was on. My friend, Dan Spiece, also applied for the first hunt, and we made plans to hunt together. Soon enough the day arrived in which the DNR posts the drawing results, and we had both drawn tags.

My first trip to haul bait was right after the Great Lakes Longbow Invitational. I loaded my truck down with barrels, bags and buckets of bear goodies, and when I rolled into Al's place,

the adventure began. We filled pails with a blend of bear-enticing treats and strapped them to pack frames. The area we were hunting was thick, wild ground. Al showed me dens and areas he had hunted in years past, sharing many stories of bears big and small that were taken. The aroma of a forest consisting of massive cedars, hardwoods, bogs, and beaver ponds was medicine for the soul. We set up several bait stations in a stretch of 7 to 8 miles over the next couple days. Don't let anyone tell you hunting bears is easy! It's hard work and a lot of it. It was hot, and those Upper Peninsula mosquitoes were relentless. Within a few days, most of our baits were getting hit, and we still had three weeks until opening day. I departed for home, leaving Al to keep the baits fresh and monitor activity. My plan was to return a few days before the opener to help him bait and set up blinds.

Fast forward to around September 5. I was driving home from town when Al sent me a text with a picture. I opened it, and my jaw about fell off my face when I saw the bear he had captured on a trail cam. Al had been enticing me for a couple weeks with pictures of bears: big ones, small ones, cubs, etc. My wife will tell you, for those weeks the only thing on my mind was *bears*. But this particular picture blew me away.

My dream was to hunt and hopefully kill a Michigan black bear, on the ground, with my longbow. My first and only other bear was with a bow with training wheels and from a tree-stand. I had long since shed the wheels for the simplicity of the longbow. There was no other consideration in my mind. I'd be content with any adult bear, as the challenge of what I'd laid before me was what fueled me. I shot my bow daily, anywhere from 50 to 300 arrows a day. There was no way I was going to screw up a shot should I get one.

I headed back across the bridge to God's country in the early morning hours of Sept. 7. I arrived at Al's place late afternoon with another large haul of bait, plus all my camp and hunting gear. My wife, who was as excited as I was, told me to stay there as long as I needed to get the job done. Dan rolled in a little later, and the next morning we headed out to run baits. See-



ing the logs tossed around like toothpicks and nothing but crumbs left at the bait sites sure did get my blood flowing! September 10 could not arrive soon enough.

Finally, opening day arrived. We double-baited the sites we were going to hunt on the 8th, and I set up a makeshift ground blind using camo netting and brush. My seat was strapped into place, and a pail of bait put out. There were at least a couple different bears hitting my bait. The bigger of the two usually came in first, and when the smaller one arrived later, he would throw logs everywhere looking for the food he smelled but could not find. Either of these boars were respectable bears.

Al dropped me off, and I started a slow walk into my blind. The spot was a good half-mile off the road, across a couple creeks, and deep into the old growth timber. Slipping into my seat, a mere 10 yards from the bait, the excitement and anticipation was palpable. I set up a video camera behind me, got my binoculars and water bottle out of my pack, and slipped an arrow from my quiver. As the nock snapped onto the string, I knew that game time had arrived. Every sense was running at full throttle. I hung "Meat," my trusted *Thunderstick MOAB* longbow, on a hook and settled in. It was 4 pm.

I was fidgety. I couldn't sit still though I knew I had to. I did not want to have a bear bust me and blow weeks of preparation. I tried to read a book from my phone, but that only lasted 3 or 4 pages. I took a deep breath, and said to myself, "Ok, you got this." I sat quietly, flicking my thumb across the cell's screen clearing out old pics, then watching intently at my surroundings. I heard every sound as the cool fall breeze blew steady in my face. I alternated doing this for a while until I was relaxed. Finally, I just tossed my phone on top of my pack and leaned back against my tree.

About 6:10 pm, I heard a twig snap from behind the bait tree. Right then I knew it was a bear and not the red squirrel that had been in and out of the bait pile stealing grains. I instantly grabbed "Meat" from its hook and waited. I didn't have to wait but about 30 seconds when this giant black shadow appeared from behind the left side of the bait tree. It was HIM! That huge bear that Al had sent me a pic of a week before. I knew this was a big bear, but when he stepped around the tree, it was like the breath was sucked out of my lungs. I muttered to myself "Holy Sh*%^!! He's **HUGE!**"

Now the mental game begins. That internal struggle to keep our adrenaline from completely taking over. That one hormone has ruined more hunts than a fickle wind. It's been the undoing of many a nimrod seeking to put meat on the table. To get this bear, I had to beat that first. Fortunately, I've learned to control it throughout my career in the fire service. While this was different, the effects are the same. I closed my eyes, focusing on slowing my breathing, taking each task one at a time.

The bear turned and went nose first into the bait, with his hind-end being all I could see. This was good. I knew he couldn't see me, so I slowly reached back and turned on the camera. As he devoured my offerings, I was afforded time to snap a couple pictures of him with my camera. I focused solely on his position and picking a tiny spot behind that massive shoulder. Time seemed to crawl. I could feel the adrenaline coursing through me as I battled to maintain my focus. I was pleasantly surprised at how well I was doing. At that moment in time, with a massive bear 30 feet from me, he and I



were the only two things in the whole world. He finally turned and was quartering away. The size of this creature was such that I really wasn't sure I wanted to take a quartering shot. He was so thick I knew there was going to be a lot of bear to get through with my broadhead before reaching the lungs. I drew once, and he looked in my direction. I froze, holding at full draw for an eternity, then slowly let down. No, I was going to wait for a broadside shot. I set my bow tip down, and it slipped off the tree root, causing my arrow to clank off the bow and come to rest on my camo netting. The bear heard it and slowly turned his head in my direction. I gulped air, as he stared right through my soul. "I just blew it," I thought to myself. I was starting to crack at the seams, and the internal battle I fought to keep my composure was something I cannot describe in words.

I was able to get my arrow back on the shelf, but the bear turned and took a couple steps toward me. He stood in front of me now at 7 yards. "Please," I prayed, "just stay over there pal. Don't even think about coming over here." He stopped and returned to his meal. In the process I tightened up on the string but again decided to wait. The bear turned broadside, head down, but his front leg was back, blocking the vitals with that giant shoulder blade. I waited. I saw the leg move, reaching to push a log over. My spot behind his shoulder was wide open. I positioned and felt the string bite into my glove as I drew back. I felt my finger hit my anchor. I do not remember releasing the shot. All I saw was my orange feathers streaking towards the bear and them sticking out right where my gaze had guided them.

I'm here to tell you that a 600-pound bear running off with a *Woodsman* broadhead in his chest sounds like a freight train coming off the tracks. I heard my arrow snap off, and a few seconds later, a crash, followed by the most intense silence ever. I sat in my seat, shaking. My vision tunneled, my heart pounding so hard my shirt was moving. I was in disbelief at what just transpired. I had just killed a monster black bear, on the ground at 10 yards with a long-bow! I had dreamed about doing just that, albeit not that big of a bear, many times. Was I still dreaming? Was this real? Or had I dozed off in my seat?

After I shut the camera off, I sat there, drinking water and replaying the whole thing in my head. Did my arrow hit where I wanted? Did I really hear him crash? How far did he go? My mind raced as the adrenaline I held back for so long was completely having its way with me. But now, I could enjoy the ride.

I met Al out at the road after I was composed enough to walk out of the bush. I was so high on adrenaline and bowhunting that I staggered my first few steps like a drunk getting off a barstool. We walked back in to take up the track and found blood, and a lot of it, right behind the bait tree. A few feet later we discovered the back end of my arrow laying in the trail. We found my bear piled up about 75 yards from the blind. My *Woodsman* broadhead took out both lungs and the aorta. It poked through the far side just a little, and retracted back into the bear's chest. The broadhead and about 2" of shaft were found resting in one of the ventricles of his heart. He was dead in 7 seconds. When we found the bear, Al looked at me and



said, "You forgot to tell him to run towards the truck, not away from it." I knelt down next to the bear, truly shocked at the size of him. I was nearly in tears as I silently offered thanks for the gift and the meals he would provide. It was a very emotional conclusion to an incredible hunt. I was humbled beyond words.



I've packed a few elk out, but getting this bear out was the most grueling work I've ever done as far as recovering an animal. We had to skin him out, take the head off, and cut him in half. That took quite a while to do in the dark. Then we had to strap the meat to a cart and put the hind quarters in a sled. It was still all two men could do to lift and pull the cart through the woods. We were only able to go 20 to 25 yards before taking a break. We slowly worked our way toward the road, and it was daybreak when we loaded the bear into the truck. We took the meat back to the cooler, then returned for the head and hide. It was afternoon before getting a shower and some much needed rest. The entire time, I was in awe at what a blessing had been bestowed upon me. I was truly humbled—humbled at the gift and humbled at the amount of work and time my friends Al and Dan put into helping me get this magnificent bear out of the bush. I could never express in words my thanks.

We were obviously unable to get a certified weight on this bear. Al has hunted bears his whole life and has helped many bowhunters do the same. He conservatively estimated my bruin at a little over 600 pounds. Al had a friend with as much experience with bears look at it, and he said 625 to 650 pounds of walking weight. We compared my bear to many pictures of similar bears with weights obtained at 500 to 600 pounds, and this one was bigger. Whatever the number is, it doesn't matter to me. He was **HUGE!** There is no doubt that he will score well. But even if he had been 200 pounds, I would have been happy as I was able to fulfill something I've only imagined doing for years.

First Time

By Joe Callahan

I have always hunted with a recurve when using traditional gear, but in 2016 I decided to hunt exclusively with my longbow. I must say I truly enjoyed carrying and looking at this bow while in the stand. The bow I hunted with just happens to be the first solo bow I ever built with some final suggestions and critique of Charlie Miller. The bow came out 62" long and 63# @ 28". Needless to say, it shoots right where I point it. I did a double bamboo lam for a bit of extra speed and stained it to match the riser. I also decided to hunt with the first set of wood (POC) arrows I ever built. I have six or seven of them left and topped them off with some 3 blade Woodsmans. I topped the ensemble off with a Great Northern Quiver.

I hunt two places in Michigan. One in Saginaw County and the other up near the Luther area. In both places all I had seen were does and spikes. With antler restrictions in place in the northern area, I decided to impose the same restriction for myself in the southern area, too. I have always looked to harvest a GOOD representation of the area wherever I hunt, but I was not wanting to take a spike.

Rut week had just started in the southern area and I made it out on the 11th of November. I set up between two runways that led to a feeding area. While I hadn't seen any rubs, I did find a scrape on the fringe of a field. I set up my stand about 50 yards from that scrape so I could see if anything was on it. I tried calling intermingled with a grunt tube and even did some rattling for good measure. I also put out a few scent canisters hoping to bring a buck in close.

The evening had a slight wind that carried sound but did not cover it. I did a rattle sequence followed by the can-call. Within five minutes a spike I had seen on two other hunts came working his way through my area. I gave one more rattle sequence and can-call just before ending the evening hunt. Even though the light was fading fast, I could see a buck coming



from the direction of the scrape. This buck had a small basket rack that looked like a six-point, but his body was a third larger than the spike I had just seen. I lowered the binoculars and readied myself. I had to bend over slightly and squat down to make the shot as he crossed an opening at 18 yards. The shot looked good but the arrow hit high and the buck went down hard. I got out of the stand as quickly and quietly as I could and shot a second arrow to finish what the first had only started.

I truly felt bad for the shot placement but reminded myself that is hunting sometimes. I looked my buck over and thanked the Lord for my blessing. It turned out to be a nice five-point that was very heavy bodied for that area. Then I realized that I had achieved my goal of using my *first* longbow and my *first* set of wood arrows; both built by my own hands! There was a

huge smile on my face as I called my girlfriend, Tracy, to say that it would be a bit before I would be home. Like a good partner she graciously offered to come help. I took a few pictures before realizing I only had a thin pocket knife in my pack. No matter, I would field dress the deer the best I could and finish the job once I got him out of the woods. I dragged the buck 20 feet to the logging trail and drove my truck right up to him. I rolled the buck onto a ladder then lifted one end at a time onto the tailgate. Once balanced I slid him right into the bed of the truck. It made for a super-slick one-man operation.

I stopped at the landowner's home to show him my prize. He was happy with the size of my deer and said that they had not seen any bigger deer in the area. There was another hunter who also hunted the property on weekends and he had taken two bucks. The land owner was surprised that I didn't use bait and congratulated me. He loved that fact that I used traditional gear, too.

I went up to the Luther area the weekend before gun season to hunt a 10-acre property that Tracy's parents own. The neighbor reported seeing a seven- and nine-point in the area the week before. On that hunt I had a spike buck and three does in front of me at the same time. When they all looked to the left, I knew another deer was coming. At 80 yards it looked like a wide six-point but when the buck was finally at 20 yards, I could see his seventh point. That is all I needed to meet the requirements for my restricted tag. I just knew I was going to get a shot and bag my second buck. I visualized where he would drop and how I would load him in the truck. At 20 yards there were branches in the way of his vitals so I had no shot. At 22 yards I went to draw on the buck and my arrow popped off the string! By the time I got the arrow back on the string and drew, he was about



30 yards and at a bad angle. I let down as it was too much of a marginal shot for me. All I could do was laugh at myself. I won't pre-dress and pre-load a deer ever again, at least not before the shot is actually taken!

When I came in, Tracy and her mother asked how the hunt had gone. I joked with them saying that I didn't want to talk about it. As I told the story of the morning hunt, Tracy's father, who is 100 percent Chippewa, walked into the room. Upon hearing my tale he commented, "Some great white hunter." We all had a good laugh over that one. The seven-point was eventually taken by the neighbor who made it a point to call and say that he got my deer. He also sent some ground burger over for me. This year has provided some great hunting for me. It has truly been a blast and a blessing.



Welcome New Members

Richard and Becca Jones
 Bruce and Jane Folske
 Timothy Eastman II
 Andrew Wcisel
 Ian Kohlhover
 Justin Grice



"Wildfire"

by Nick Viau

The trail in was heavy with sign and I grew more excited with every step. It had been an uncharacteristically warm December at Wild Things until Floyd "Bub" Wells and I crossed the South Carolina border. Andrew Harper (owner and operator) was convinced we'd brought the Michigan cold with us. Rain too.

No one seemed to mind. Camp had been dry, hot, and buggy. Drought had decimated the entire South East, in fact. Tennessee had succumbed to wildfire and was still burning when we passed through it. We considered it a blessing when it began to pour near Gatlinburg and thanked God on behalf of the locals, despite delaying us further.

We considered this a good sign for the upcoming hunt. And it was. The first day and second morning had been wrought with the sights and sounds of wild critters. I'd seen and stalked my first wild hogs, courtesy of my dear friend, Thom (Jorgensen), and watched two young six points duke it out in a creek that evening. We'd kicked up three large sows and at least 15 piglets on a stalking excursion the following morning, which was a tale in and of itself.

There hadn't been a dull moment since arriving into camp, and I was convinced something magical was going to happen that evening. I would be hunting "Wildfire," a stand located on the corner of a large, grassy field and aptly named when a controlled burn got out of hand a few years prior. I could not help but see the coincidence of the name, and it would take on new meaning for me by trip's end.

I'd always loved hunting fields. I knew I would see game and there was game aplenty at Wildfire. It began with turkeys arriving after I got settled. They were singing, hitting every conceivable note in the turkey scale, including the most obnoxious of yelps from a loudmouth hen. The sound was so loud and so obvious, I could only assume Bub had been making it from the neighboring "Hog's Waller" stand across the field.

It was dead quiet at 5:30 and daylight began to fade. I was reminded of something Andrew said back at camp. "That's when you'll see 'em boys," he said. "We've had a late acorn drop 'round here and they've got no place to be until the sun goes down." Well, it was going

down and the curtain was coming up. I readied my bow, stood up, folded my seat, and waited for the show to start.

My preparation was met with a loud popping sound and the rustling of grass near the center of the field. Something big had bedded amidst the shoots and no longer was. The noise drew closer. I scanned the field but failed to find the cause. The fact something capable of making such a ruckus was inbound but still hidden, meant the grass was higher than anticipated. The waiting was nerve-racking in the waning light.

The grass parted about 20 yards out and what looked to be a large, black, shark's fin surfaced amidst the brown and gold. "That has to be one of those razorback looking hogs Thom was talking about?" I thought to myself, the Jaw's theme playing in my head. I anticipated where the beast would surface, aligned my shoulder, and bent at the waist prepared to draw. To my horror, the wind swirled from face to neck and the monster stopped dead in his tracks. I'd never seen an animal stop so suddenly. I held my breath, as if to wish the wind back to normal, but to no avail. He turned, snorted, and headed toward a cut on the opposite edge.

He cleared 60 yards in what seemed like seconds. I couldn't believe what I was seeing when he stepped into the cut. He was massive—a mass of muscular jet black with a long snout. My jaw dropped and stayed there until it hurt. Thom had shot a hog running 340 pounds on this very property. He figured the first two we kicked up a day earlier at five yards were around 250. This guy had to have been somewhere near the latter, and it broke my heart to see him waddle out of my life.

It was almost dark now. The affair had sucked all but a sliver of shooting light and the wind was still terrible. I wrote the rest of the evening off, lowered my bow, and climbed down the ladder. I'd just unhooked and was fooling with my quiver when the unmistakable sound of disturbed palmettos shocked me to attention. A snort followed by a popping sound could only mean one thing—a hog had arrived upwind.

I nervously knocked an arrow and turned to



confront my visitor. Standing there, at a mere ten yards, was a big, black hog. With nothing between us but a sapling or two, my heart began to thump wildly. I retreated into that primal place a bowhunter goes when it's time to act. It is difficult to remember what actually happened, but I recall tracing the leg to the shoulder, concentrating on the shadow behind it, and releasing. Arrow met hog with a violent cracking sound that plunged the world into chaos around me. He bolted, taking it with him, all I could hear was angry hog versus whatever was in his way for several minutes. The havoc created was awesome. Leaves flew. Palmettos drummed. Sticks exploded. Jaws popped. I admired the tenacity and power of this animal.

I froze, unsure of what to do. I was sure I hit him solid. It was a close shot and my equipment was perfectly tuned to kill such an animal. But the light was low and the arrow had disappeared too quickly to be sure. He circled back while I was sorting things out and came to rest in the leaves. He breathed heavily, letting out a low angry growl with every exhale and a pop of the jaws mixed in for good measure.

We sat there like that for a minute or two—man and beast alone in the dark. The night had come and it was strange to hear something growling at you that you couldn't see. I fumbled for my light and decided it was time to leave. As much as I wanted to stay, I knew I wanted no part of an injured wild hog in the dark and I didn't want to push him. I needed to give him time to expire. I owed it to him to die in peace.

I backed out slowly, arrow knocked, and made my way to the road.

Thom's pickup rounded the bend at the same time. I must have looked spooked because he threw it into park and hopped out to see what was up. "Well, you look like you had some excitement partner." He chuckled.

"Yeah...I hit one," I sputtered. It was difficult to breathe, and tell the story at the same time. "He was a big pig...not as big as yours...but he was big...I think I hit him really good....he was growling at me in the bushes...I couldn't find my arrow...I think he has it...I'm not sure though...I didn't see any blood...but it was dark...and he went crazy when I hit him....and I heard a loud crack...and I wasn't in my stand...I was on the ground...I might've hit him in the shoulder...but it all happened so fast."

Bub had climbed out of the passenger seat by the time I finished blathering and could tell both were amused by the story I had just vomited all over Thom. "Well are we tracking?" Bub laughed. Thom put his hands on his hips and stared into the night. This is what he did when he was thinking. No doubt analyzing every detail of my story to a degree few could comprehend. I would've waited 20-30 minutes and charged back in with a longbow, a headlamp, and a "wish me luck." Thom needed a plan and that plan would have all angles and possibilities factored in. He was the Mr. Spock to my Captain Kirk. That was our dynamic.

"I think we should calm down, pick up the others, and head back to camp for supper. Let's give him some time and let Andrew know what's up. He'll want to hear your story anyway. My guess is he'll suggest we come back in the morning when we can see what we need to see."

Dinner was electric. It was steak night and the table buzzed in the aftermath of my adventure. Everyone wanted to know the details. They were sure my arrow had done its job. Everyone but me, that is. I began to have my doubts as the hours passed. Steve was the first to see past my goofy exterior and see how worried I was. He knew me too well and did his best to talk me through it. "Nick, we know you can shoot. We know you wouldn't shoot if it wasn't ethical. And we know your bow and ar-

rows are heavy enough to get the job done. There's really nothing you can do at this point until we see what is what." "I don't know dude..." I mumbled. "I think it was too dark. I think he might've been quartered toward. I think I threw that shot." "You ain't going to know what happened until you know what happened." He laughed. "Just settle down."

Thom knew I was in for a long night and thought a trip back to Wildfire might settle me down. It had been several hours and there was a chance we might even find my hog. I was out of the truck the moment Thom's brakes quit squeaking. It took every ounce of restraint to not sprint to the stand. Andrew went with us. I showed them where the hog was, where I shot him from, and where I thought he might be. Things went south from there. We found no blood, no arrow, and no tracks. It was as if I'd imagined the whole thing. I felt like an idiot. "There was a hog here guys and I shot him. I assure you. I admit I was really excited and the details are foggy, but I shot him."

"I'm sure you did Nick," Andrew said. "I think it best to come back in the morning. We aren't accomplishing much in the dark. If he took your arra' and he was a big hog, he probably took the blood with him, too."

I hardly slept that night. I replayed the scenario over and over in my head. Each version was a little bit different than the last, which didn't help. When I did drift off, I dreamt about it, and then snapped back awake. I didn't know reality from fantasy by the time 5:30 rolled around. Still, I jumped out of bed, pulled on my gear, and headed to the cabin for a cup of coffee. Andrew had a pot on and an omelet ready to boot.

The entire camp wanted to come with me that morning, but I insisted that Steve, Ted, and his son Luke hunt as planned. Luke thought he might see a pig and tagged along anyway. We were happy to have him. At 16 his young ears and eyes proved invaluable.

The excitement was palpable and I had chewed my nails to the nubs by the time we arrived. The tracking party consisted of Thom, Bub, Luke, Andrew, and Andrew's dog Harry. Charlie, the camp caretaker, also joined. I must have thanked them all a dozen times.



The scene of the crime was as confusing as the night before. I was starting to think we weren't going to find anything, until the first drop of blood was found 20 plus yards into the brush. Andrew found another and hope shot through me as if it were injected. I'm sure I made a fool of myself. "See guys!" I hollered. "I told you I shot a pig. I bet you he's around here somewhere! Hell, we'll probably trip over him."

The high wouldn't last long. Sifting through pine needles and thick brownish/red leaf cover was a painstaking affair. It was a rollercoaster affair. Patches of good blood would appear and dry up just as quickly. Then, someone would find a drop and the process would start again. Thom's peroxide-infused blood trailing formula proved invaluable. When the trail thinned, he would spray the ground, find the smallest of drops, and we would continue. This was a fantastic learning opportunity for me. I had never had to track an animal. Anything I'd ever shot had died soon after. An hour into the search, I was finding blood I had no business finding and was proud of myself.

The ups and downs continued well into the morning until Luke found my arrow discarded atop the leaves near the road. The results were telling. It was clean, save for 4 to 5" inches of blood on the business end. There were no noticeable signs of damage. The blood was bright red with little, dried-up circles on the wings. We thought they might be foam, but a lung hit

seemed unlikely with such little penetration.

The trail dried up after that. What began as wet spatters turned to dried spots on pine needles, spots found on our hands and knees with peroxide at distances of 20 yards or more. We pressed on, but as time passed, I knew there was little chance of recovery. Even Harry, who was exceptional at finding hogs, had abandoned the chase and was now chasing armadillos.

Thom stood up after the last speck and got quiet for several minutes. Finally, he looked at me and broke the news. "He's not mortally wounded, Nick," he said. "I think he shouldered into your arrow and you hit that dense leg bone. The head probably glanced off and lodged in his hide. The blood stopped after he shook it out."

My stomach knotted and I felt sick. "Well, what do you think?" I asked, already knowing the answer. He clapped me on the shoulder. "I think we should call it. And I wouldn't say that if I thought there was a chance. But I won't if you want to keep at it."

I took a moment to let everything sink in, but I knew what the outcome was. "No. I don't want to waste any more of anybody's time. We have one hunt left. I'm just going to have to live with this one." It was the hardest of reality checks. I injured an animal, something I hadn't done since my very first season. I took great pride in that statistic. Now it was gone. The incident clock had just been reset and I felt totally inadequate. I shook Thom's hand and thanked him for the help. I was about to do the same with Bub, when something strange happened. I'd taken one step in Bub's direction when a palmetto bush exploded to my right and three hard-charging hogs flew out before we could figure out what was going on. They all looked exactly like mine and moved single-file in a line so straight we could've marked it with a bowstring. They were there and gone before any of us could even think about knocking an arrow.

We stood there dumbstruck – all three of us – with ridiculous smiles on our faces.

Things seemed better somehow. A moment before the outburst, I felt the worst I had ever felt afield, but there I was smiling like a little kid with two of my closest friends. I couldn't



explain it. It was as if some wild spirit had took pity on me and sent a sign. The hog I'd shot would heal and there were plenty more where

he came from. It wasn't the closure I wanted, but it was something.

Back at camp, a heart-to-heart with Steve also helped to ease the sting. He knew how bad I felt. He'd been there before. "You've gotta let that stuff go, Brother. These things are going to happen. I don't care how ethical you are or how much you practice. There is so much that can go wrong. This isn't an easy game we play."

"That doesn't excuse it," I sulked. "No it doesn't," he said. "But all you can do is get back out there, learn from it, and move on." He was right and I knew it. I would carry the loss of that animal back to Michigan and knew I would never be rid of it; but it would make me a stronger man and a more efficient predator. I would never forget my adventure at Wildfire, but I would learn from getting burned.

MLA Council Seats

It is that time of year again when we start looking forward to the summer shoot schedule. The first on the list is the Michigan Longbow Association Spring Shoot and Membership Meeting. This event will be held at the Land-O-Lakes Bowmen in Fenton, Michigan on May 5-7 and is FREE to all MLA members in good standing. There will be free camping, shooting, and lots of food to share in our time together.

One of the purposes for this gathering is to elect representatives to an MLA Council seat. There are open seats this year and new representation is always welcome. This governing body helps make administrative decisions throughout the year that keep our organization strong. The Michigan Longbow Association is a vibrant, thriving club involved in a number of programs scheduled all year long. Preparations for these programs takes knowledgeable and committed leadership to ensure success. There

are few requirements for a seat on the Council; but applicants should be a member in good standing, have access to the internet, and be available to meet several times a year. Your presence will be expected at as many events as possible, and your commitment to the MLA needs to be unwavering.

Interested individuals must present a bio to the editor to be published by March 1, for the spring 2017 issue of STICKTALK magazine. A short paragraph explaining who you are and why you would like to join the Council will help the membership make an informed decision when it comes to voting at the annual meeting. These bios can be sent to sticktalkeditor@yahoo.com. This is a great opportunity to give back to the organization that has given so much to you. We look forward to your next step in the longbow lifestyle.





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Hunting Mistakes

by John Buchin

We have all made some mistakes in the throes of deer season that impede our main goal of harvesting a deer. This is a list of 15 things that I can assure you will handicap the deer hunters in their mission. I can personally attest to having tested the theory out on a couple of the items on more than one occasion, and some days afield, multiple items on this list were put to test. Names have been omitted to spare some campfire ribbing.

1. Sleep in.
2. Enjoy a bit too many spirits the previous evening around the fire.
3. Fail to "pick a spot."
4. Pick the wrong spot.
5. Wander into a waist-deep raspberry thicket before sunup.
6. Try to exit said raspberry thicket.
7. Only bring arrows tipped with field points.

8. Eat the wrong food at the evening campfire.
9. Leave your bow at home.
10. Become obsessed with a bronze, ground-ridden bird so much that hunting it supersedes hunting deer at any given moment.
11. Decide unconsciously this is the year to be a still hunter, with the inability to remain still.
12. Leave your bow just out of reach while brushing in your afternoon ground blind.
13. Hunt in an overgrown clear-cut, then #4.
14. Numbers 2 and 8.

And finally...

15. Realize on the pre-dawn hours of the Archery Opener that your wallet is short the vitally important "deer tag," and attempt to locate a DNR kiosk prior to 5:30 am with a competent sales staff to make the figurative last-minute purchase.

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FRUSTRATION!

by Chuck Williams

The previous archery hunting seasons have left me high, dry, and very frustrated. That would all change in 2016. For at *least* the last two archery hunting seasons, I have been dedicated to hunting with traditional equipment only.

The 2014 hunting season found me with three opportunities at bucks, only to leave me empty handed. I shot the first buck just over his back, the second I shot just under his belly, and the third? Well I never got a shot off. I was shooting out of the same stand, using the same recurve, with all three bucks standing broadside in the same spot twenty yards out. I had been making those shots on 3D targets and was feeling very confident. So, what was I doing wrong?

In comes 2015. At the first big shoot of the year, Compton's, I bought a new 3-piece take-down longbow. I really liked it and spent the whole summer shooting it. I was shooting well and again feeling confident. I had decided I was

going to dedicate this season entirely to my longbow.

Opening morning, October 1, 2015, I saw a nice 6-point. He stayed out of range. October 2, I saw him again. This time he walked up and stood right next to the ladder of my stand. He started to walk further on. At 10 yards, I grunted. He stopped...I drew and released. It flew at the perfect angle for his quartering away, but, over his opposite shoulder. It was so close, I think the feathers touched his back. Here we go again!

A couple of days later, I had a different buck come into the same stand. He was 13 yards out, broadside, and relaxed. I put another perfect arrow just over his back. *DANG IT!* Once again, I was missing the shots I had made all summer. I figured out that I had not practiced shots that close from the 16-20 foot heights of my stands. My solution was to put a stand up off my back yard and start practicing.

Several weeks later, while I'm hunting from a different stand, a nice 8-point comes in. He ends up slightly quartering away at 10-12 yards. When I pick my spot, draw and release, he bolts. I watch him run out of the woods, crossing a field. I was sure the arrow was high, just over his back. I can see the arrow sticking out of the ground. It looks clean. Replaying the shot over and over in my mind, I realized that I did see the feathers disappear for a fraction of a second then reappear. Also, deer don't usually take off on a mad dash sprint, not stopping, unless they're hit. I climbed down and examined the arrow. The shaft was covered with blood. Now I'm excited! With the help of my eldest son, we picked up the blood trail, only to have it dry up on the other side of the field. I believe I hit him high through the back straps above the lungs. I felt disappointed and frustrated once again!

Two days before opening day of firearm season, I see a really nice 10-point in the woods just off my back yard. The following morning found me out in my stand, hoping to see him again. I got lucky. A little after 9 am he came in from behind me, chasing three does. At full speed, he chased the doe beside me. I grunted loudly twice. He stopped at about 10 yards, quartering my direction and looked up at me. I was already at full draw. I focused at a spot between his sternum and front shoulder, releasing the arrow. It happened so fast, I probably wasn't as focused as I had thought I was. I heard a loud crack and the buck bolted. I was sure I had shot high, hitting a tree on the other side of him. After a few minutes, I located my arrow sticking in the dirt 90 degrees to the direction I shot. Careful examination found a speck of blood on the splintered end of the shaft. The broadhead was not to be found. After a long tracking job, the blood trail dried up.

That was my last opportunity of the season. Two seasons, seven shots later...still no kills with a traditional bow. UUGGHH!! I think Lucy has been holding my targets! How "Frustrating"!

During the summer of 2015, Rob Jones had been trying to talk me into going on a longbow bear hunt in Ontario, Canada. He had organized a hunt with Bear Creek Outfitters. Dusty, the owner-guide at Bear Creek Outfitters, had do-

nated a hunt for our club to auction off at the MLA banquet. The pressure was more than I could "bare" and I won the bid on the hunt. I was going to Canada in August, the weekend after the GLLI, to hunt bear with a longbow! Was I nuts? I couldn't kill a deer and I was set to go bear hunting!

Two weeks before the hunt I bought a bow at Elm Hall. It was an A&H 64", 59lbs @28". I had always wanted one, but the price tag was just too high. When I found this one for about half of what they are new, I just couldn't resist. Changing bows so soon before the bear hunt... I really was nuts! I shot as much as I could in those two weeks. I was ready. At least, I hoped I was.

Saturday morning, August 27, 2016, Donovan Watson and I are finally on our way to Canada. It was a beautiful ride along the northern coast of Lake Superior. We arrived in Thunder Bay that night. We met up with the rest of the crew the next morning. At breakfast, we all got the chance to get acquainted, then we were on our way north to Armstrong Station. Reaching camp in the early afternoon, we were pointed towards our cabins by our guide, Dusty. We dropped our gear, changed clothes and headed out to hang tree stands.

After setting up my primary hunting stand, which was over 25 miles from camp, we discovered a hole in the bottom of the radiator in Donovan's truck. It's always something when you're on a hunting trip. We decided to come back later to recover the truck and the entire group piled into Dusty's truck to finish hanging stands. Donovan's site was a couple of miles further down the two-track. By the time all of the stands were hung and baits were put out, it was too late to go back out to hunt.

Monday we got up, had a good breakfast, arranged our gear and spent some time honing our skills on the practice targets. For me, it was an uneventful day. I didn't see any bears. If you read Rob's story, you know that a bear was shot the first day, but not recovered, and other bears were seen.

Tuesday, the only thing I sighted was a pine marten visiting my bait. Wednesday, I decided I was going to sit in my stand until I heard Donovan coming in the truck to pick me up, or

until I couldn't see the bait any longer. Night had come and I hadn't seen any bear. I was feeling pretty discouraged. I hadn't heard the truck, but, shooting light was gone. It was time to gather my gear and head out. As I was preparing to lower my bow down, I heard a branch break in the near distance. I strained to see in the darkness. Again, I heard branches breaking. It was so loud I thought it may be a moose. There had been moose tracks (not the ice-cream) and scat on the trail coming in. Next thing I know, there is a bear coming straight at my tree. He stopped at about 10 yards, stood there for a few seconds, then turned and walked back to the trail that led to the bait. He walked down the trail, stopping again behind a couple of big pine trees. What was he doing? Why wasn't he going to the bait? Then, I hear, "Chuck?" in a low whisper. I slowly turn my head and see a head lamp in the brush behind me. It's Donovan. *He's only about 40 yards from the bear.* I whistle at him to let him know I'm there. I look back to see what the bear was doing. He was walking on to the bait. He stood broadside in front of the bait station. I could see his silhouette, but with the dark backdrop, it was hard to size him up. He looked like a shooter. I was wishing he had come in earlier, when all of the sudden, he took off crashing through the woods behind the bait. I looked down and saw Donovan walking up to my tree. He whispered, "Did you shoot?" (He thought I might have shot earlier and that was why I was still in my stand. He didn't know about the recent bear.) I signaled to him to douse his light and stay quiet. When we returned to the truck, I told him all that had happened. That was a close call. It could have turned into an ugly situation!

Thursday we decided to head out early and sit all day. Up to this point, the weather had been pleasant, for the most part. It had rained quite a bit, but it was a warm rain. The day started out pleasant, but we would have a thunder storm come in that afternoon with a big temperature drop. I sat in the same stand, hoping the bear from the night before would wander back in. Donovan chose to go to his alternate stand but forgot his tree umbrella at his usual set-up. As the rain came down, I stayed

nice and dry under my umbrella. All I could think about was Donovan without his. I could have dressed a little warmer though. Either way, I didn't see any bear at all. Discouraged again. But, my plight didn't seem so bad after hearing Donovan's story when I picked him up.

He was soaked and miserable. He was about to call it quits when he heard something behind him. It was a nice bear. His spirits were lifted. Then two cubs came running past the sow and onto the bait. His heart sank. Then things got exciting. The sow was at the base of the tree and sounded like it was ripping his vest to shreds (he had left it on the ground.) Turns out, he also left his empty bait bag down there and that was what the bear was after. When she was done, she looked up and saw Donovan. She instantly started snapping her teeth. Donovan said the cubs went flying up trees. Now he was wet, cold, and *scared!* He didn't know what she was going to do. Fortunately, she decided to go to the bait and eat. The cubs came down and joined her. When they were finished, they lumbered away. Donovan said he could still hear them nearby, but he was ready to get out of there. Two close calls for Donovan!

Now, it's Friday. Still no bear. I decided to hunt from my alternate stand. Its bait had been getting hit daily. It was a new stand site in thick forest on the edge of a beaver pond. I was in the stand, ready to hunt before 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I had made sure there were no limbs in the way and had even practiced drawing from a seated position. The day was long with no bears to be seen. By 8:30 that evening, pretty dismayed, I knew I only had about an hour of shooting light left. Half an hour later, with the light starting to fade, I realized my hands looked like neon signs. I needed to put on my camo gloves. Upon doing that, I looked up and about 50 yards out in front of me I saw a bear. It walked over behind some trees. I waited and waited, but it did not show itself. I thought perhaps it saw me putting on my gloves and spooked. *Great, I sit here all day then blow it at prime time!* All of a sudden, I hear this really loud growling...almost a roar. I'm thinking "Oh, crap! It knows I'm here and is trying to scare me off." But, where is it? Then, I see a dark object behind the bait. I am trying to remember

if there was a stump or a log there. You know how things change when you start losing light. Then, it moves. Yes! It's a bear. It slowly comes in behind the bait and disappears once again. Suddenly, its head pops out from under the tree that is down on the right of the bait. Its body soon follows. The bear stood broadside, eating the doughnuts I put out by the bait earlier. It looks right at me, then goes back to its snack. It was comical because she would pick the doughnuts up with her paw and enjoy them like we do with our hands.

Not wanting to spook her, I plan on shooting her while sitting down. I shifted in the seat, just a little, to get into shooting position. When I did, the seat squeaked. The bear dashed off behind the bait. Noooooooo! I blew it. I'm sitting there, sure the hunt is over, when I see her coming in again. Yes, another chance! Again, she comes from the right side. Looking my way, she starts to eat again. I'm in position this time. This is it. I'm going to shoot a bear. As I drew my bow, my legs start to shake uncontrollably, which made the seat squeak again. You guessed it. She bolted again. Not again! I can't believe this is happening. Did I mention that this bear is **HUGE!** It's at least 400 pounds. Well, my luck holds out. Here she comes. I stood up after she ran the last time. I was in a more comfortable and natural shooting position. She returned via her favorite route from the right. With the light fading and the dark backdrop of the tree behind her, it was getting difficult to pick a spot in the kill zone. She eyeballed me again then, feeling secure, began eating the bait. This was it. I started to draw and she turned her head, looking right at me. I'm at half-draw and holding...holding...holding. Finally, she looks away. I come to my anchor and release. The traitorous arrow crashes into the brush behind her, skimming just under her belly. Away she goes! Aaarrggghhh! Now I really blew it! That bear's not coming back after that. Low and behold, I see movement. (Those must have been some dynamite doughnuts!). Here she comes again. Now, I'm saying to myself, "Come in on the left, bear! I don't want that dark background behind you." I believe in Divine Intervention. This time, she comes in from the left. *Now* I have a good view of her. This

has got to be it. I'm losing light fast. This time she knocks the logs off the bucket and swats the bucket over with her paw. I wait for her to stop looking at me and to start eating. I draw, focusing in on a spot and released. I watched the feathers of my arrow disappear in her side. She crashes off behind the bait. I last see her at about the same spot I originally spotted her from. I stood for what seemed like five minutes, not breathing, just listening. She had been slightly quartering away and I felt my shot was a bit too far back. I climbed down and went to see if I could find my arrow. That would tell me what kind of hit I had. The arrow was behind the cribbing. The back end with the feathers was missing. The shaft was covered with dark blood, no signs of a gut shot though. Good. I'm thinking liver and maybe only one lung. I decide to hike out and return later with help. I didn't want to push her.

Gary picks me up out on the two-track. I show him the arrow and tell him my story on the way back to camp. Once at camp, I tell the guys what happened. "We've got to find it," I say. "It's HUGE, all of 400 pounds!"

We have dinner, then head out to find my 400-pound bear. Three hours had lapsed by the time we get out to the site. There was a good blood trail through the swampy area with lots of bogs and ground moss. She had followed the shoreline of the beaver pond. About a half mile later we found my bear. It's amazing how much weight a bear can lose when it runs that far. My 400-pound bear was down to 225 pounds. I was thrilled. I killed a bear with a longbow. The arrow passed through her liver and the far side lung. The missing portion was still inside her. Dusty estimated her to be 14-18 years old.

If you want to go on an awesome, top-notch bear bow hunt, look up Dusty at Bear Creek Outfitters. I highly recommend them and look forward to going back myself. Next time, though, it will be for that 400 pounder.

Okay, fast forward to deer season 2016 and I'm looking to kill my first whitetail with a longbow. My first opportunity comes when a fork-horn buck comes by my stand at 20 yards. I'm not discriminating. I need to get that first kill under my belt. I give a low mouth grunt. He stops. I draw and shoot. He runs away as my



arrow safely hits the dirt just under his belly. Well, I guess I have cured the whole shooting high thing.

Opportunity number two. A big mature doe feeds to within 12 yards. She runs away after my broadhead sinks into a log just under her belly. Really, now I'm shooting low all the time. I must be tucking my chin too much, huh?

Halloween morning. A beautiful day to be in my ladder stand. I'm located just in the edge of the woods with standing corn 20 yards in front of me. Shortly after 8 am, I see a buck coming from my left. There is a pond along the edge of the woods. He acts like he is going to cross the

field, moving away from me, so I start using my can-call to hopefully lure him back my way. It works. He comes around the edge of the pond and up to the corn field. I lose sight of him. I notice a branch sticking out in front of me that is going to interfere if he comes out of the corner of the corn. So, I lean out to remove the branch and as I'm stretched out, here comes the buck around the corner. I freeze in a very awkward position. The buck is looking at me. I can't move. *Great. Now what, genius?* The buck looks away, slightly and I move a little. Each time he looked away, I moved a little more, until I was back upright. He kept looking up as he slowly made his way around the corner. I thought, "There is no way I'm going to get a shot." Now 13 yards in front of me and broadside, he knows something isn't right. I'm focused on a spot behind his shoulder, just waiting. He makes the mistake of turning his head towards the corn. I draw, anchor, release. The arrow perfectly disappears high behind his shoulder. He turns and runs about 40 yards into the woods. I watch as he stands there, wagging his tail. He takes one more step, then collapses. Yes, finally, I killed a buck with my longbow!

I have never had a more fulfilling and exciting season. As I write this, there are only three more days left of the late archery season, and I don't want it to end. I already can't wait for next season.


LONGBOWS FOREVER! 

Chuck lives in Manitou Beach, Michigan, with his wife Heather. He works at Duncan Aviation as an aircraft mechanic and inspector. Chuck is an avid outdoorsman, enjoys various sports, and loves spending time with his family.



Ron Youngblood

It is with great sadness to hear of the passing of Ron Youngblood.

After a prolonged illness, Ron passed away on December 18, 2016. Over the years Ron and Barb have attended many archery events. Ron was always very approachable and friendly and will certainly be missed. Barb and Ron's family are planning a service in the spring with date and location to be announced later. 

Thank
You



Thank
You

GCCI Vendors

Most all of us go to shoots to have fun. We shoot some sticks, pluck some strings, and enjoy our traditional archery friends. There are some folks, however, that go beyond just having fun. For them a shoot also includes the commercial aspect. While it is a labor of love, it is still labor. Go to your local hardware store or archery shop. You will find very little there to appease your traditional archery appetite. Ahhh, but these fine folks provide us with goods and services that we are unable to attain elsewhere.

They load and unload. They give discounts, donations, and support to our great organization in more ways than any one of us can imagine. The traditional archery vendors are more than just a store front. They are our neighbors and our friends. It is not an easy task to do all that they do and still have fun at it. When you think of shopping for the traditional archer in your life, think about supporting the businesses that support the MLA. From all of us to all of you, thank you for all you do.

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The Addiction of a Gear Junkie

By John McIntosh

Addict: Noun 1. A person who is addicted to an activity, habit, or substance: a drug addict. Verb (used with object) 2. To cause to become physiologically or psychologically dependent on an addictive substance, as alcohol or a narcotic. 3. To habituate or abandon (oneself) to something compulsively or obsessively:

Let's face it, most of us are addicts. Not in the substance dependent category, but to be perfectly honest, a good many of us are gear junkies. Seldom can we walk through a store with a sporting goods section and not at least take a peek to see if they might be carrying something we "need." We toss junk mail aside like rotten vegetables, until we spot an archery catalog: Cabelas, Bass Pro, 3Rivers, Kustom-King, etc. Mind you, we may not often actually buy something, but check to see if there is something that suits our never-ending quest to improve upon our hunting gear.

As we continuously try new gear, we toss some things aside to replace it with a new arti-

cle that has better function, feels better, looks better, or just stirs something primal deep inside to the point it's added to our kit. It could be as complex as getting a new longbow to as simple as different socks. But as hunters, we find we have a collection of knives, bows, arrows, various clothing, etc. We are gear junkies.

Along the way though, eventually we run into something we take extra emotional or spiritual attachment to. That one or two items we cannot replace, cannot be without when we venture afield to shoot or to hunt. It could be anything. Perhaps an heirloom handed down from other generations in our family, or something that just seems to bring good luck. Those

items are destined to stay with us as long as they are not so worn out or broken that their usefulness has passed.

This leads to the story of a certain piece of gear that holds seniority over everything else in my arsenal of outdoor gear. The "Lucky" hat. Now Lucky and I go back a long way. It pre-dates both my sons. We've been together longer than my total years of being married. Lucky and I have been together roughly since 1988 or 1989. Close to 30 years anyways.

Lucky started out as a Crusher style Mossy Oak (original) camo hat, reversible to hunter orange with a built-in, sewn-on face net. At the time, I thought I had found the perfect hat. Good for bow and gun season as well as spring fishing excursions into the insect infested north-land known as Ontario. Lucky satisfied the gear junkie in me. Fast forward a couple years, I'm gonna say about 1992. At this time, Lucky had yet to earn the name, "Lucky." It was just a hat. Although I had endured a fair amount of ribbing from hunting and fishing pals about how ugly it was, it was just another hat among many.

On a May fishing trip, while we were jigging for walleye on the headwaters of a small river leading from one bug-infested Ontario lake to another, a gust of wind blew my much maligned hat into the water where it caught the current and sank before I could retrieve it. Though mildly distraught, these things happen. A few nights later, while evening fishing about 50 yards upstream from the scene of Lucky's demise, I felt a heavy tug on my jigging rod. I set the hook and reeled it up. No fight in this fish I thought, and to my shock and dismay, there dangling from my jig was my hat! Of course my fishing partner told me to throw it back as he was never fond of that hat. I unhooked it and plopped it, wringing wet, unto my head and proclaimed that this was indeed, a very lucky hat. And that is how this gear junkie and the Lucky Hat and I became inseparable.

Over the years, my head adorned with the Lucky hat, I caught many fish; but even better yet, we hunted together often. Many white-tailed deer fell to my arrows or slugs. My first bear. My first turkey. Lucky has hunted with me in the insect-infested Ontario bush, Colorado,



Ohio, Indiana, and all over Michigan. Lucky fished for walleyes, salmon, perch, and bluegill. Lucky went to a log of 3D shoots and was a regular attendee at Camp Wilderness where its Lucky charms would be restored by being around so many young kids eager to learn how to become the gear junkies of the future.

Now Lucky's special powers were no secret in our household; and soon enough, both my sons as well as my wife, would offer to take Lucky with them on outdoor excursions in pursuit of wild game. Amy's first deer, as well as Alex's, were shared with Lucky, Austin's first turkey as well. I even had taken an occasional youngster up to old deer hunting grounds to get them their first deer, and let Lucky ride along on their heads for good measure. But age was catching up with Lucky. Tattered, worn, the poor rim that encircled it was falling off. Holes were popping up, and Lucky need to be repaired several times. The netting that came attached to it was long since gone. My wife suggested perhaps Lucky should be retired. Fat chance of that! Instead, she fixed it. Several times. But it was obvious Lucky could not continue long at the pace it had, so it was semi-retired: only brought out for openers and



special occasions.

Early this past September, I was sorting and packing hunting gear for my upcoming Michigan bear hunt in the wilds of the western Upper Peninsula. I opened a cabinet in my shop to look for something, and out fell Lucky onto the bench. I froze! This surely was a sign! This surely was something here, trying to tell me something. Lucky wanted to go bear hunting. I certainly couldn't do that, now could I? Into the tote it went. Threadbare, faded, tattered, and torn, Lucky was going hunting once more. As I loaded gear into the truck the night before I departed for God's country, Lucky found its way onto the dash of the truck; obviously as anxious as I!

Opening day of bear season found Lucky and I nestled into a comfy ground blind we had built a few days previous, watching over an active bear bait, waiting for a bruin to arrive. And arrive one did. A couple of hours after sitting down, I was able to make a perfect bow shot with one of my other gear junkie favorites, my Thunderstick longbow I refer to as "Meat." The result of which was a tremendous black bear whose weight was well over 600 pounds live weight. Lucky was on my head the whole time, continuing a legacy of first-time successes.

This was my first longbow bear and what a truly magnificent bear he is. Lucky stayed with me through the whole process of getting it out of the woods and back to camp. The following day, my hunting partner had yet to see a bear, so I offered him the use of Lucky. He jumped at the chance and departed upon his next hunt with Lucky perched happily atop his head. Dan hunted while I stayed in camp working on cutting up my bear. After his return from the hunt,

he had seen no bears, but I told him to be patient and one will come. I never gave it any thought beyond that.

The following day before hunting, I reminded Dan to wear Lucky. He looked at me with a distressed look upon his face and said, "I lost it." "What? Lucky is lost?" I was certain he had simply misplaced it among his gear, or it had been dropped along the trail into his bait; still, the thought that our time had come to an end ate at me. I made peace with it, thinking Lucky may have given up the ghost and gone to hat heaven in the process of me getting that huge bear. Dan was obviously upset that he had lost track of poor ol' Lucky, but continued to look for it.

That evening, Dan killed a bear and we celebrated his success. The following day, we went up to the hunting area to check and rebait for some other hunters that would be following us; and I walked over to where Dan had placed a ladder stand which he eventually ended up not using. I looked around on the ground for poor Lucky, to no avail. I was ready to write it off and close the book on Lucky at this point. Perhaps its last act was putting me in front of such a great bear days before. Perhaps it was fitting that Lucky would rest eternal in the very forests where it spent its life. I looked up in the trees, and....wait! Is that? What is that on the branch up there? LUCKY!!! There it was, perched on a branch, deep in the north woods of God's country. Lost and found once more.

It's no secret that ragged old hat is special to me. Among my every day hunting gear, over the years I have acquired a few sentimental items as well. My pruning snips once belonged to my grandpa. My folding saw was my Dad's. My neck knife as well. The gear junkie impulses in me have softened much over the years. Through trial and error, I've found what works for me. I'm aware the economy does suffer a bit more because of it, but had I not had the addiction to gear, Lucky never would have found its place on my head.



One More Arrow

By Matt Wirwicki

A few weeks ago, I was surfing one of the social media websites. It was on one of those specialty forums that requires membership by being "added" to the group. It was an archery forum dedicated to traditional archers. While scrolling through the content, I came across an ad by one of the advertisers. The ad was for a mechanical broadhead called "Bloodsport" by Night Fury. Really, there was no ad. It was just a picture of the product in its package as you would see it in an archery shop.

Upon seeing the image, I immediately felt my stomach turn. The product is sealed in a bubble pack surrounded by splatters of blood, highlighting the broadheads themselves. It bothered me, especially seeing the ad on a traditional archery page. Looking closer at the product packaging artwork, I saw the depiction of a man holding a compound bow in the corner. The pose suggests a victorious gesture like what you might see following a medieval battle.

I understand that the way to internet profiting is through advertisers sponsoring their websites or pages. I certainly hope that accepting



this advertiser was an oversight by the traditional archery site owner, of whom I would hold to a higher standard. Nevertheless, as a proponent of traditional archery, I somehow feel a desire to remind ourselves that this is not what we condone or how we behave. I'm not trying to suggest that it is the way of the compound shooters, either. I cringe when I hear or read graphic statements like, "I murdered that deer" or "I stuck me a 10-point." It is those same hunters that "Bloodsport" targets in their marketing campaign.

Perforate at line, send to address on back.

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Organizations such as ours in the MLA promote good ethics, family values and ethical practices. It boasts clean stories and pictures of successful hunts without the blood and guts. Blood or sometimes the animal's suffering is the unfortunate reality. It is the part of the hunt that the mature hunter keeps to himself while telling his/her story. We take the most pride in the quick kills no matter if by bow or by gun. We learn of kill zones and relentlessly practice with our bows and arrows.

We participate in countless archery shoots to better our odds of lessening the time the animal suffers. Do we have bad hits? Sometimes, yes. Are we proud of them? Absolutely not. So, we practice some more and shoot *One More Arrow*.

When considering your choices between the vast array of equipment available to the archery enthusiast and when telling our stories, let us all not forget our maturity and above all the great respect we have for the animal and the gift it has provided us.

Perforate at line.

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