

STICKTALK

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
OF THE
MICHIGAN LONGBOW ASSOCIATION

Volume 30
Number 1
Winter 2018



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STICKTALK

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DEADLINES

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Editor's Point

by Ms. Caroline & Bub

Most of the STICKTALK issues have a solid deadline for completion. Those deadlines are normally set due to an event that dictates information be given to the membership within a certain timetable. The winter events are the Kalamazoo Expo and Winter Awards Banquet; spring edition is the Spring Shoot and Membership Meeting. The summer edition is the GLLI and the various "outreach programs." The fall issue however, is the only one that does not have a deadline. This fall we took advantage of the lack of deadlines and focused on a number of pertinent personal items. This pushed the delivery of STICKTALK back several weeks. For this we apologize. The fall issue was a full edition as is the winter issue. Hats off to you, the membership, who keep the material coming and sharing the experiences of the longbow lifestyle.

Many of us went afield this fall to chase critters with our longbows. I had a great experience one morning late in the season. Bub had gone to the lake to try his hand at waterfowling, and I was left with a choice of any stand in the woods I wanted to use. A steady drizzle finally chased me from my perch and I decided to head to the house around 10 am. Knowing that I was going to have surgery on my hand in a few days I had my daughter cut my hair short and straighten it. Fearing the damp weather would cause my hair to frizz and curl, I had my ladder stand seat cushion balanced on my head like a porter on safari. I was plodding across an 80-acre new winter wheat field that has a long finger of brush running into it when I saw movement a couple of hills over. The movement turned into the antler tines of a running deer. I immediately thought that I had jumped a buck who was on the prowl for a doe and he was

headed back to the safety of the bushy drain. As I stood there staring, it became obvious that the antlers were **coming** toward me not running **away** from me! The deer



materialized into a large 8-point buck whose direction and demeanor indicated that I had not innocently intercepted his intended path but rather the animal had seen me and was coming to investigate. So there I was in the middle of an open field with a rutting whitetail bearing down on me. What should I do? Balancing the seat cushion on my head I pulled an arrow from the quiver and nocked it. The buck paid no mind to the movement and kept coming. When the deer reached about 18 yards, I squared my body and tightened my grip on the string. This may turn into a survival thing and I for one wanted to survive it! About that time a gust of wind blew the seat cushion off the top of my head. WHOA! The buck stopped abruptly. We stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity. Face on, no shot, no cover, just a crazy deer who couldn't figure out why his opponent's rack had just fallen off his head. At long last the whitetail determined that cowardice was the better part of valor and casually turned around to trot away. How cool was that?

You will see a lot of hunting stories in this edition of STICKTALK as you should, but you will also note an underlying theme. That of hospitality, gifting, mentoring. These are just some of the wonderful attributes which characterize those who belong to the greatest longbow club in the world. Read and enjoy the stories in this issue. Thank you for all the material you send in. STICKTALK means so much to so many because you the membership are willing to share your experience with others. Keep it coming and remember, we'll make you famous! ➡

From Under the Brim

by John Buchin

With the chase of whitetail deer behind us and our holiday seasons coming to a close, we find ourselves at the threshold of a fresh New Year.

2017 was another great year with some highs, some lows, some losses, and some gains. After a year such as this, I find more often that my time in the wilderness is spent taking stock of where I am, especially within the holiday season. I find myself very thankful and grateful for my family. I am also thankful and blessed to be a part of such a great organization of people.

As this issue is coming to you in the mail, 2018 is starting and the calendar is already starting to get weekends penciled in for the many great shoots the year will bring. First up for us is the 2018 Traditional Bowhunters Expo, January 26 through the 28. Bob Brumm has another great Expo coordinated, and the Michigan Longbow Association will be there, along with a Who's Who list of vendors, archers, and speakers. We will be manning the test range as well as the MLA booth/ Kids' range. Be sure to stop in and see us! We will have Banquet tickets available at the booth, as well as shirts, etc. If you find that you will be attending the Expo for any length of time and would be willing, we certainly could use a hand with the Kids' range and the merchandise at the booth. Get in touch with any of us to let us know if you can come hang out for a bit.

February 10 at Woodshire Banquet Hall, the MLA will once again hold its Winter Banquet. It should be another great gathering of those that live the Longbow Lifestyle. If you haven't purchased yours already, tickets are on sale on the website; and if you do not participate in digital commerce, you can send payment to:



Steve Chappell
2421 Rowley Rd
Williamston, MI 48895

Tickets are \$20 each which gets you in for dinner along with a chance at \$500 towards a longbow by a MLA Bowyer. Just as a reminder, this event is For Members Only, so please make sure you renew prior to or with your payment for the tickets.

We have two other events on the schedule for 2018. The Spring Shoot/ Membership Meeting, will be held at Land-O-Lakes, May 4 through the 6; this event is free for current members. The GLLI is on the calendar for August 9 through the 12. Other dates/shoots will be added to the calendar as they get confirmed by the host clubs.

If you find that you would like to have a larger hand in the workings of this wonderful organization, there are a couple of seats unfilled on the Council. Send in a bio to Sticktalkeditor@yahoo.com. It can be a lot of fun and is quite rewarding.

Thank you all for another great year.
Longbows Forever!



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Treasurer's Report

by Steve Chappell

As I draft the Treasurer's Report on this last day of 2017, I want to send a sincere thanks to all MLA members who have supported their association through membership, donations, attendance at events, purchases and volunteering. It was a great year...thanks to you!

The MLA is headed into 2018 financially strong with \$17,427.73 in the bank. This included \$1,700 from 2018 banquet tickets of which, as you should know, are sold well below our actual cost as a means of giving back to you, our valued members. If you have not gotten your banquet tickets, you can go to the MLA website, the Kalamazoo Expo, or send me a check. If you are sending a check, please call me so I can hold your spot since attendance is

limited. As a reminder, the MLA Winter Banquet is now a members-only event due to limited seating.

Please remember to check your STICKTALK mailing label to see when your membership expires and renew. You can renew for multiple years at a discount.

In closing, I want to express my thanks to all the other MLA Council members who work tirelessly to keep your association at the top of its game so you get the biggest bang for your membership. And, a special thank you to Caroline Wells for her exemplary work on STICKTALK; she has taken your MLA communication vehicle to a level few member organization publications have achieved.

Wishing you a great 2018



Your Mailing Label is Your Membership Card!

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 STICK-

TALK (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!

Membership Report

The MLA membership currently consists of 482 households with 214 spouses included! We have members in five countries and 18 states. Please contact sticktalkeditor@yahoo.com for any address changes or if you'd like to add or (hopefully not) remove a

spouse, phone number, and/or email. Keep in mind that MLA memberships are family memberships and include a spouse and school-age children in the home. Since STICKTALK is mailed as bulk mail, it is not forwarded or returned if there is a change of address.



Jarred W. Burns

Age 18, of Vernon, received his angel wings Dec. 25, 2017. He was born Oct. 14, 1999, in Howell, the son of Jeff Burns (Teresa) and Angela Dudley (Myke). Jarred is survived by his parents; brothers Robert (Ashley) and Charles Burns (Alexis Sexton), Gavin Houle (Briana Burtraw), and Michael and Oliver Dudley; sister Alexys Dudley; grandmothers JoAnn Rodgers and Julia Burns; aunt Christy Anewalt (Mike); uncles Kevin (Heather) and Rob Rodgers; many cousins and other siblings that have shared his home. Jarred loved his two nephews, Wyatt and Lane Burns, and had a special little girl named Alayah, age one, that held his heart. He was predeceased by his brother Jacob Burns, and grandfathers Charles Rodgers and James Burns. Jarred had a special gift with children and was known as a

baby whisperer. He was genuine, caring, and fiercely protective of his siblings, family, and friends. He was quirky and unique. He had an unhealthy obsession with chicken nuggets, chocolate milk, olives and frappes. Jarred was eager to "preach" his past to troubled youth to try to help steer them in the right direction. Jarred belonged to the Michigan Longbow Association and loved archery. He was a good mentor and loved teaching kids how to shoot longbows.



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Arrows were stashed in quivers with care
As the morning's hunt soon would be there

I arrived at my spot, well before light
The woods were all drenched with a blanket of white

Up on the ridge rose a man with great stature
He was donned in wools, boots, and a quiver of fine leather

We met at the draw, overlooking deer beds
I noticed his wools and arrows were colored in greens and reds

"I am usually quite busy this time of year,
But it is a beautiful day to stalk after deer"

We talked about the grounds, the deer and weather,
And agreed that life in this moment couldn't be better

We shook hands and parted ways
Off to finish our hunts for the day

Hours later, I arrived back at my truck
Several miles were covered, but without much luck

I noticed my new acquaintance waltzing out of the trees,
"Tough day to stalk, with snow to our knees"

As we unstrung our longbows, I looked for his ride
When I finally saw it, I thought I was out of my mind

He climbed into his chariot, colored in gold and red
The woolen man tipped his cap and turned his head

"Tomorrow will be better, but you'd best hunt in my spot instead
As my long night of work begins, after you've gone to bed"

The reigns were snapped, quick and blunt
And arose eight deer, a red-nosed one in front

The sled was off, quickly up to speed
The deer were quick and strong indeed

They began to rise, above the grounds and the woods
"Merry Christmas to you, and may your hunt be good!"

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year's Michigan Longbow Association,
from my family to yours.

On to the Expo, on to the Banquet! See you all soon, and God bless!

by John Buchin



The Off Season

by John McIntosh

As hunting archers, we are blessed with a long season to pursue game. Once it begins, we lose track of the time we spend sneaking around the forests, fields and swamps trying to loose an arrow at unsuspecting game. For the hard core, there are only two hunting seasons: this year and last year or this year and next year.

Each season begins similarly, a head full of excitement, anticipation, and enthusiasm. Early fall greens and bugs gradually give way to vibrant colors, cooler temps, and more active deer. The rut phase begins to take shape, and then just as things really start to get interesting, gun season happens.

Now there is nothing wrong with gun season, and I will freely admit I enjoy a few days camped out with my muzzleloader, or this year with my Grandpa's old -06, hoping to put some meat away for winter. But it's not bowhunting. I know many who continue to hunt with their longbows, and at times I will too, but for me after a few days of the mid-November circus, my enthusiasm begins to wane. Deer activity changes drastically, and here in the UP, the

weather does too. It gets harder to sit in the cold temps with minimal deer movement. But those hard core enough continue on; after all, there's still another month left to deer hunt before we return to the off season.

The chaos of the holidays: added commitments of Christmas parties to attend, family gatherings, and everything else that goes with it cuts into our hunting time. Soon enough, Christmas, and then New Years, descend upon us; and before we know it, deer hunting is a thing of the past until next year. It's the dreaded Off Season.

So what is a longbow-addicted hunting fool to do now? For me, by the time January rolls in, I've been in the woods hunting with my longbow since late September, when bear season started. I logged over 20 days just hunting in my bear stands. Add to that 5 weeks of daily bear baiting prior to the season. Bait early, hunt later. Every day weather permitting. As soon as bear season ended, I was hunting deer. Now I wish I was doing that daily as well; but with a pole barn project underway, as well as a few winter preps to get caught up on, bowhunting

deer was at a slower pace than bowhunting bears.

But back to the looming question--what do we do during the dreaded off season? Sure, we catch up on all the honey-do's neglected while checking the woods for hot scrapes. We can re-organize and re-evaluate our gear, our tactics, and our execution. We begin to make preps for the next fall's adventures. But wait!

January brings snow. In that snow, rabbits make tracks. So we can break up the winter doldrums by stringing up our longbows and hunting rabbits and squirrels. What better time to explore new sections of woods, lose a few arrows while shooting at fast moving snowshoe hares or cottontail rabbits.

Winter is also time for the Kalamazoo Trad Expo, several other outdoors related weekend shows, and of course, the MLA Winter Banquet. What better way to keep the fire in the belly than to spend time with family and friends at either of these spectacular events?

The off season is the time to tinker--try new arrows, new bows, new shooting styles or new techniques. Build arrows. Repair hunting gear. Research new places to hunt. Plan distant hunts. Scout new areas. Order maps. Study aerial photos. Make new bowstrings. Build a bow. Try your hand at knife making. Patch a leaky tent. Fix the camp shower BEFORE the GLLI. Knap some arrow heads. Harvest a few staves. Grind some turkey or goose feathers. Make a new quiver. Trade some gear. Try new game recipes. Share your successes with friends and family. Shoot in a winter league. Teach a kid how to shoot a longbow. Make plans for the MLA Spring Shoot. Buy a new shooting glove. Make a new tab. Stump shoot with a few friends. Hunt coyotes. Trap some beavers, and make string silencers. Make a turkey call. Wait--turkey call? By the time you get through half of this list, the snow is beginning to melt, the ice

on the lakes is beginning to recede, and turkey season is coming on soon.

As longbow-loving traditional archers, there is no "off season." Our lifestyle lends itself to a can-do self-sufficiency, a tendency to learn new skills, to tinker, to tweak, and to experiment. There is no off season, when your lifestyle revolves around everything stick and string. Sure, it may not be deer season again for a while, it may be a year or two before you can draw a bear or turkey tag. No matter the status of a particular game season, when it comes to loving and living the longbow lifestyle, there is no closed season.

Pick a spot, see the shot, and always share the passion with someone new.

From the snowy thickets of Lost Arrow Acres, near the shores of Gitche Gumee, I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas season, and your new year brings your dreams to reality.



2018 SHOOT SCHEDULE

JANUARY 7 - ARCTIC

FEBRUARY 11 - MIXED GAME

MARCH 11 - ALASKAN WILDERNESS

APRIL 15 - PREHISTORIC

MAY 20 - SPRING BEAR & TURKEY

JUNE 10 - CHARITY SHOOT
WORLD DRAGON SHOOTING DAY

JULY 15 - AFRICAN SAFARI

AUGUST 19 - ELK AND MULEY

SEPTEMBER 9 - WHITETAIL WARMUP

Work Party each Saturday before shoot

You may begin course from 9:00am-1:00pm
Adult shooters ~ \$10
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Cubs always shoot free

The Worst Best Season I've Ever Had

by Rob Kruko

As we all know this year's archery season started out hot and dry. So much so it was hard for me to get excited about it. Having lived and hunted here in Michigan for 37 years, I knew it would get better. I normally don't start hunting seriously until the second or third weekend of October, the time called the pre-rut period. This year however, I realized I was getting older and concluded that I hate to miss any time hunting.

With that realization I decided to start early this year. Since the deer here were literally wiped out three years ago by E.H.D. (Epizootic hemorrhagic disease), I only hoped to see a deer much less shoot one. That wasn't the case as I started seeing deer right away. At first only two or three; then a couple of weeks later, I saw five, six, seven. Before long I was seeing eight to ten different deer at a time! I was having a ball! It finally looked like the deer population was coming back.

One day I had a big doe come straight at me at 15 yards, then she turned broadside at 17 yards. I pulled back my bow and reached my anchor point for the shot. The string slipped off my glove and I missed the doe by a foot! Can you believe that? What can I say except, "that's bowhunting."



The very next day a six-point buck came in to my stand at 17 yards. The deer turned and started quartering away. The opportunity presented itself and I took the shot. The shot looked a little far back, liver maybe or worse, gut. I tracked the buck for over two miles before losing the sign in a big wet swamp. In two days I went from the second best shot in archery....to the worst, just like my season went.

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The Gift of Hospitality

by Floyd Wells

The Greek word for "hospitality" is philoxenia, meaning, "love of strangers." The hospitable person is comfortable entertaining others - family, relatives, friends to be sure, but most especially when welcoming strangers. People with this gift have a special sensitivity with others, and they know how to make people feel at ease and wanted. Making strangers feel comfortable and at home takes the form of a ministry that helps dispel loneliness and builds a sense of community.

<http://synodresourcecenter.org>

You have heard me say it before, the Michigan Longbow Association is different but it's not the equipment that makes it so. It's the people! I know the good folks on the MLA Council get tired of my preaching at them about how to serve others and how to embrace folks where they are. It seems I've had good teachers.

As most of our faithful STICKTALK readers know I have shared my experiences on the pages of this magazine for a lot of years. So many of you recall the story of my introduction to the Michigan Longbow Association. Having shot a recurve for a number of years I had been making quivers and wooden arrows for some time. I had even ordered a longbow to be made by MLA member Maurice Cash but as of yet had not picked it up at his work shop in Armada, Michigan. The MLA was having a shoot at Wilder Creek, and I showed up just to see what this organization was all about. As I was walking across the parking lot a voice hailed me

from the box of a pick-up truck. An MLA member called me over and asked where my bow was. I explained the situation and he thrust a new "Low Tech" longbow into my hands. "Don't forget where you got it, and make sure you have fun today!" That person didn't know me from Adam yet he entrusted me with a new bow. I have never forgotten that moment many years ago. That one selfless gesture is what has shaped my opinion of this club since.

About that same time my buddy Andy Paulsen obtained a book called, "Tree Stand Hunting for Whitetails" which was written by Paul Brunner. In it there was a list of bowyers for the fledgling reawakening of the sport called traditional archery. There was an address for a bowyer just down the road in a little town not far from my home. We couldn't wait to meet a real live bowyer but upon arrival we discovered that the address was an abandoned house trailer in a horse pasture. Just for kicks we stopped

at the corner store and asked the clerk about the address. The lady behind the counter picked up the phone book and looked up the name. "Two doors down on the left-hand side," she said. I met the bowyer that day and have enjoyed a friendship that has weathered the storms of time. He patiently attempted to teach me how to make bows, build knives, knap heads, etc. I never became a craftsman like he is but it was his mentorship that I learned to cherish. His knowledge and abilities are unparalleled. Turned out that he was there in the beginning of the longbow revitalization; was a part of the organization called the MLA.

Those who have visited Caroline and me at the farm know all too well that we have immersed ourselves in the "*Longbow Lifestyle*." I have a number of bows that have come to rest in the spare bedroom upstairs. Some are wall hangers and some are shooters, but most are teaching tools obtained to share with others the simple joy of stick and string. Precious few do I use for my own shooting purposes. Most of those I have sold to finance other things. Of those left there is a 45# 64" 3-piece longbow that bears the brand name of an MLA bowyer. I treasure it both for its performance and for the friendship that I share with its builder. Most all the bows in that room are available to those who ask for a loaner, especially those new to the sport of traditional archery. However, when it comes to that bow, I tend to be a bit selfish. It doesn't leave my sight, nor does it go on the course without me. It is my "go to" bow and I don't like to think about my archery life without it.

Once at the MLA Spring Shoot I had loaned a 35# longbow to a new member. As the weekend came to a conclusion, it was obvious that he had moved past that entry-level stick and was ready to enjoy the balance and speed of a custom bow. As he started to the course with

his family I called him over and thrust my pride and joy bow into his hands. Under protest he accepted my offer and enjoyed the performance that I had long since knew the bow was capable of. This after I had loaned a brand new custom bow to a gentleman under protest at another shoot. He was also hesitant to take the offering and his worst fear came true as he returned the 3-piece bow in five pieces. It moved me to see a grown man so grief-stricken. I assured him that it was only a bow and that I knew the bowyer would make it right. However, my calm approach did little to restore his confidence in borrowing archery items. The bowyer did make it right. Fact is, I have seen numerous MLA bowyers hand a person a bow and walk away without payment, or with a comment cast over the shoulder: "Pay me when you can." Never knowing if, and sometimes not expecting reimbursement.

I once bought a left-handed longbow that I thought would be a great teaching tool, but each time I attempted to use it, the student had trouble keeping the arrow on the shelf. Seems that the platform was simply too small to accommodate the shaft. A long-time MLA member saw what I was talking about right away and customized the shelf so that it could be used for my intended purpose.

One year at a large camping shoot Mrs. Caroline was shooting a custom longbow on the range only to have the fast flight string saw the tip right off the limb. Of course this happened at full draw. She was none too happy with the outcome. Enter an MLA self-wood bowyer. He took the bow and in a matter of days returned it with a new tip and a new B-50 string.

There is an MLA member who takes interest in sharing the sport of traditional archery. Every so often there will be a package that shows up at the farm. In it there will be bows or arrows intended to be shared through our various



outreach programs. The man always supports others when and where he cannot be present himself.

I had bought a set of compressed cedar shafts that I had saved for a long time. These were very hard to find and were no longer available for purchase. So I was determined to make them into something special. I took them to an arrow smith that specialized in tapered shafts. He took them and I didn't see those shafts again for over 5 years. Finally one day I was sitting at the MLA table in the large Compton tent when he walked by and dropped the newly tapered shafts on the table. He made little conversation as I asked how much I owed him. His comment was, "for as long as I've had them, I should be paying you!" With that he walked away.

Now I make a decent arrow. Nothing that would win the contest at the Winter Awards Banquet but one that will give me a lot of service for a lot of years. I did not want to entrust my limited abilities to such fine shafts so I took them along with some feathers and nocks to the best arrow smith I know. Out of that sum of parts, a long time MLA member created the finest set of arrows I have ever owned. They

have taken several hogs and whitetail bucks for me. I still have a few of that dozen left and enjoy looking at them as much as shooting them.

I recall not being satisfied with the penetration I was getting from that set of cedar arrows and knew I had to find a combination of FOC to make them work. The out-of-state hunt was coming up quickly and nothing I tried seemed to work. I got on the phone and called a long time MLA member for advice. In 48 hours a box arrived packed full of inserts, weights, broadheads and every other thing that you could think of to tune an arrow. In just a few minutes I landed upon a combination that made those arrows fly like darts and hit like sledge hammers.

Speaking of arrows, an MLA member saw a bow that I had purchased and said he had some carbon shafts that he thought would be just what I needed to make it shoot well. That member drove three hours to hand deliver them to me personally. I was so impressed by his act of kindness, I purchased a few dozen carbon shafts and made up some arrows to give to several students who allowed me to teach them the joys of traditional archery. A simple pay-it-forward kind of thing.

Many years ago I was at a shoot in Berrien Springs. I always camped on the fence near the practice range in order to observe all the different shooters. That was BC, (before Caroline) and I was a great one for making venison stew or venison roast over the open fire. Having observed the shooters for several days I had seen a fellow with long white hair flinging arrows at the practice range. He always seemed to be by himself so I invited him to hop the fence and eat supper with me. He did and the man has been my friend ever since.

When Mrs. Caroline came into the picture, we devised a plan that would bring folks together over dinner on Saturday afternoon at

the GLLI. We would wander the campgrounds until we found folks we didn't know and then we would invite them to lunch. You see the great common ground is simply food. It is one of the basic needs of all living things. Food, nourishment something we all need to have and something we most always can share. Food bridges all culture and casts. If there is a gathering anywhere it will involve some type of food. When the GLLI first moved to Charlton Park, attendees were only allowed to camp in the central parade ground. Many wonder why the Wells' park out by the old wind mill. Bright sun and no shade. Well, it is because it was the wind mill that was the central structure in that area. Everyone came and went along that path from the barns to the camps or the courses. It allowed us to meet new people and visit with others who may not have a connection within our archery circle.

Speaking of the GLLI, how many attended the story time at the pavilion in the past? What a great event that was! A microphone was shared with the founder and with a young teen. Each with a story to tell. Each feeling comfortable and safe in that environment to share it. The same thing holds true with the MLA club newsletter STICKTALK. Members send in stories, poems, pictures, happy to share their experiences with others in the MLA family. They feel safe in doing so. This summer I was approached by a professional writer who complimented the newsletter. He asked how many pages we averaged in each quarterly issue. The answer: 38-40 pages. With no advertising to take up space! He was astounded!

Think about the amount of outreach this club does and how many lives are touched through traditional archery and specifically the longbow. Conservatively speaking, we had over 2,000 people in attendance at all the outreach programs we ran last year. A little club of 500

has members in 15 different states and 5 different countries. Do you still think it's the equipment that makes the difference? I think not. It's the type of person that chooses the equipment we use. The difference then is the people.

These are but a few of the many stories that I can think of off the top of my head. I've had many, many more as I'm sure you have, too. It is inevitable. It is in their blood. It is what makes the MLA a family. I have spoken to folks who have attended shoots across the nation. While there are places that have better targets or bigger grounds, the GLLI is always known for its family atmosphere. More women and children are involved at the MLA shoots than anywhere else.

I originally wrote this story with all the names in place to recognize the common gesture of each one of these MLA members, but just before it went to press, I decided to remove them. I am sure that the embarrassment it would have caused these individuals would have created more pain than pleasure. They know who they are. I pray that they know how much they mean to us and the MLA family. I guess the point of this article is to recognize what we have in this organization. It is bigger than the sum of its parts. We all have seen the MLA represented at weddings, funerals, in magazines and on TV. Being a part of this organization has become meaningful and personal to so many.

As I wrap up these last few lines maybe I should issue a challenge of sorts to our readers. After all it seems appropriate at this time of the year with the holidays and all. You know things like Christmas good will and New Year's resolutions. Just maybe we could do a couple of things like recognize the way you have been helped by someone in this archery family and perhaps find a way to help someone else.





My First Traditional Buck

by Phil Strickland

³ My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee and will look up.

Psalm 5:3 kj

I thought I would write about my bowhunting experience this past weekend, if for nothing else but to document the memory on paper or at least digitally. I really love bow season. It is my favorite season of the four we get to experience in Michigan. I think it brings me closer to nature in many ways. For years I hunted with a compound bow and really enjoyed the challenge it brought, but I recently switched over to traditional archery and something special seemed to happen and I am not sure how to put it into words. There is something artistic, simple, and natural about it. I think my dad felt it challenged him in the same way. Growing up in my early years, I remember my dad having a longbow and then a recurve. I remember one Christmas my dad received a compound bow, but he could never really get into it like we thought he would. I think he enjoyed the more


basic approach to archery as he could never seem to get attached to a heavier bow with training wheels. Now I see it more clearly as well, especially after this weekend. A good friend of mine, Dennis Kleiman, introduced me to a longbow a couple of years back and the attachment to a traditional bow has continually grown since. I didn't want to hunt with it until I felt my confidence level was where it should be, or at least at an acceptable level.

November 4 started out to be a great morning. Cool and a little overcast. The temperature outside was 34 and I heard rain was coming in from the west a little later on. I put my hunting clothes on that I usually keep outside to better mask scents and geared up. Grabbing my longbow and my three arrows I was on my way out back. I made it to my stand and after climbing up with my lifeline and securing myself into the

stand, I relaxed for a little while. After a time I decided I would nock an arrow. Somehow it managed to slip from my fingers and it fell to the ground. Oh well, I am not going down there to get it. It's not worth disturbing the surroundings to retrieve it.

So, being more careful I was able to nock the second arrow. The air was crisp and I was able to reflect on how good God has been to my family and me. I am so thankful to be able to take in the beautiful scenery of God's creation as the day wakened on such a still morning. As it was getting lighter, I could hear the neighbor's roosters telling the deer it's time to wake up. I think thirty minutes passed when here came the doe I have been watching this year with her two button bucks. They hung around for a while eating some corn that I placed on the ground. Then, I heard another deer snort not too far away. The doe took off leaving the two behind to see what was out there. A few minutes passed and she came running back with both of her little bucks and darted away. I knew the rut was on and I waited to see what she was running from when a nice four-point came in and gave me a shot. I sometimes get a little excited! Ok, I ALWAYS get excited at this point and I am prone to make hasty decisions that can cost me. I drew back and let go too quickly. My arrow flew quickly over his back and the buck jumped and took off not really knowing what happened. I thought maybe he'd come back. There's my arrow stuck in the dirt, all lit up with the nock shining green.

After waiting a while, another buck showed up. This one was a spike. Ok, this is possibly my "do-over." This time I knew better and I

talked my way through it as I usually try to do. "Okay, full draw all the way to the anchor point, aim lower due to my elevation and smooth finger release." My last arrow was gone and I heard the sound of impact and believed it was a good hit. The deer jumped, spun around, and ran off. Wow! I sat there in the stand with my adrenaline racing. The third arrow stuck in the ground shining green. Oh my goodness, I think that was a good shot but wasn't sure. I was shaking and thinking, "This is why I hunt." This is why I get up early on cold mornings for opportunities like this. I am still smiling as I write this. Well, I waited for a while in the stand until I couldn't wait any longer. I had to get down, collect my arrows, and inspect the one that passed through the buck. The arrow indicated a good chance that the shot placement was right. I started out tracking the deer and made a wrong turn somewhere. I had to backtrack a ways to pick up the trail again. I found it after about seventy yards. It was a good hit through the lungs. One hunting rule I live by is, "the success of the hunt is the satisfaction, the reward and achievement of taking a deer whether it is your first, or not." In this case, taking this deer with my 42# @ 28" longbow brought me that satisfaction. This spike doesn't look like a ten-point buck but it felt like it to me. 

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The Edge of a Season

by Nick Viau

"Build a man a fire, and he'll be warm for a day. Set a man on fire, and he'll be warm for the rest of his life."

— Terry Pratchett

Steve collapsed by the fire with a sigh and a stretch of the leg that butted his heels to the rim of the cast iron pit. "Well, you see anything, Chief?" He asked, watching water evaporate from his boot soles.

"Yeah, seeing is one thing, shooting is a different story altogether," I said, staring at the flames. "I had a spike come in around 9:30. Nice high points. I liked him. Missed just beneath the boiler maker."

Steve removed his Fedora and shook the water into the fire. The droplets hissed as they turned to mist. He gave it a look, stuffed it back on his head, and let out a long, tired sigh to wick away the frustrations of the day. "Well that sucks. At least you saw something. Thom and I—not so much. How far away was he?"

"Too far." I laughed. "That was the problem. I figured him at 20 yards and paced him at 30. That's pushing it for me. I felt confident at the time but never would've dropped the string had I known."

Steve raised his eyebrows and nodded. "I

gotcha. Hard to tell in the woods sometimes."

"Yeah. I suppose. Arrow fell right off the table." I said, making a diving motion with my hands. "Never did find it." "You lost the arrow too?" He laughed. "Lots of leaves around here though. And all this rain softening the ground sure ain't helping us any."

I nodded in agreement and slipped an old, plastic-handled Buck knife from its kydex sheath to change the subject. It was your garden variety Walmart special—five inches of blade with a gut-hook out the back. Steve noticed it immediately and a smile formed at the corners of his mouth.

"Who gave you that ol' thing?" He chuckled. "Oh, some ornery old curmudgeon with a bushy white stache," I replied, thumbing the blade for sharpness. Finding none, I handed it back to its former owner and prepared for the ribbing I was about to receive for its lack of care.

He slid his glasses down his nose, examined the blade, and then glanced at me above the rims. "You know what the secret to a good knife

is?" he asked. "Keeping it sharp. You need to take a stone and strop to this thing." "I know. I suck something awful at sharpening a knife. I can sharpen broadheads but can't seem to apply it to a blade for some reason. At least not without one of those little black Smith sharpeners or something to that effect."

Steve chuckled. "Well you do 'em both the same way. Just run the edge along the stone lightly until you get a burr, then a bit lighter to remove the burr, then hit it with the strop." I nodded, taking it back. "Yeah, I need to work on that." "That knife sucks anyway," he grinned. "That's why I gave it to you." "Hey! You told me it was a good one!" I sputtered. "Well, the other one you had was worse. I didn't want to hurt your feelings." "I know. You've been telling me to invest in a good knife since I've known you. It's just one of those things I never get around to buying. Something more important always seems to come up."

"I hear you, partner. You should get one someday though. Every man ought to have a good knife. Something he can take into the woods with him and depend on the rest of his life. And a good one *will* last if you take care of it."

That was the last evening of camp and Steve went back to Georgia the next morning, leaving the rest of us to deal with the end of archery season and the inevitable blaze orange vests and caps. I tend to stay out of the woods during this time. Most trade their longbows for the firearm of their choice but I never had much interest in those things. Being in the woods without my longbow always felt odd. I'd heard too many bowmen utter the phrase: "...it was a nice deer, but I really wish I'd have gotten it with the longbow..." early on to consider anything but a stick and string. A proper piece of private land to hunt would've probably changed my mind, but sitting in natural cover,



on public land, during gun season raised the hairs on the back of my neck a bit too high. I decided to leave the woods to the guns and prepare for the holidays instead.

Staying out of the woods without a deer in the freezer wasn't easy for me. It left me with too much time to think about mistakes I'd made and the deer I'd missed. I must have replayed the encounter dozens of times in my head—each time thinking about what I should've done differently. When that had run its course, I started thinking about how little I'd prepared for the season and continued down a spiral of moping that ended with my questioning why I even bothered with a license in the first place.

Thanksgiving came and went and I'd all but given up on bowhunting for the year. December was looming and my 36 birthday with it. Christmas would follow soon after. My mind was stuck between getting closer to 40 and the stress of holiday preparation at work and home. My desire to hunt (or do anything for that matter) was minimal at best by the time my birthday arrived. A single message from Steve would change all that. We had chatted little since camp, which wasn't like either of us. He too was preoccupied with work and the holidays and irritated he couldn't spend as much time in

the woods as he'd hoped to.

I was just getting out of work to meet Jessica and the kids for a special birthday dinner when I got the message. It contained five words: "Happy Birthday and Merry Christmas." I stopped walking and stared at the screen—face scrunched in confusion. I appreciated the birthday wishes but it was only the fifth. Christmas was a ways away. I assumed he was being sarcastic about our lack of communication and responded in kind.

"Christmas? I'm assuming you've finally had enough of people and are planning to spend the next several weeks in seclusion?" "You'll figure it out," he messaged.

Dinner with the girls was wonderful but I couldn't stop thinking about Steve and his cryptic message. I tried to goad him into a response but it didn't do any good. Steve was really good at keeping a surprise, a surprise. We were different in that regard. I couldn't wait to spill the beans and didn't have enough fingers and toes to count how many gifts I'd ruined by either sharing too much information or just giving it to them prematurely. Steve was fully aware of this little quirk. He could see me squirming all the way from Georgia and was loving every minute of it. I was sure of that.

It was dark when I arrived home and checked the mail. The plastic door flopped open to reveal a single package. I pulled it out, assuming Jess had ordered a Christmas gift, but the dome light revealed something else entirely. "Lucas Forge." I read aloud, revealing the sender. "Why would Lucas Forge be sending *me* a package?"

The answer was obvious. It hit me squarely in the chest. I sat in the driveway for several minutes, staring at the package until a lump formed in my throat. My phone lit up on the console. I swiped the screen and found a chat bubble waiting for me. "Well?" Steve typed.



"Did you get it yet?" "What on Earth did you do, Steve? This is too much. I can't accept something like this." "So you like it?" "I don't know. I haven't opened it yet!" "Well quit whining and OPEN the thing!"

I pulled into the garage, unlocked the door, and flew into the house—package under arm like a running back. I couldn't get through the tape and into the box fast enough. What I found beneath the cardboard flaps rekindled the fire that had all but gone out. There, beneath a navy cloth, was a well-oiled, cross-draw sheath with a handle poking out the end. I could feel my eyes start to water as I removed the knife from the cloth and carefully slipped the blade from the leather.

It was a Lucas Forge "Packer" model, approximately eight inches overall with an osage handle and 3 3/8" blade that featured an aged patina finish. I fell in love with it the moment I held it in my hands and was shocked at how comfortable it was—as if it were made just for me.

It had also occurred to me that I had seen this knife before, on Steve's Simply Traditional page a few days prior but hadn't thought much of it at the time. He had always been a fan of Lucas Bullington's work and owned one of his knives. I assumed he'd just purchased another for himself. I couldn't have imagined he'd purchased it for me.

I put down the knife and immediately picked up the phone. "You know I don't like gifts like this," I said. "You did this just to make me feel uneasy didn't you?" Steve laughed. "So you like it?" "Like it? I love it! It's unbelievable. It's also way too much. Again, how do you expect me to accept something like this?" "Just don't cut your damn self. You know what they say about giving someone a knife and them cutting themselves with it, right?" "No. Never heard that one." "Well...don't cut yourself. He puts quite an edge on those. You'll cut your eyeball if you look at it hard enough. And please, for the love of God, *keep* it that way!" "It would be disrespectful to do anything but, my friend. Thank you. This is unreal. Honestly...I can't thank you enough." "It was my pleasure. Just so you know, I tried to match the handle to the limbs of your St. Joe, but Tracey didn't have any more of that flamed hickory they used to make it. That's kind of a rare wood I guess. I went with the osage to match your riser instead." "It's perfect. I love osage and it looks great with the rustic blade. By the way, is this the same knife you posted the other day?" "Yessir!" he

laughed. "Hid it in plain sight. I wondered if you were paying attention." "You're too sneaky for your own good. I can't wait to use this thing." "Well get back into the woods this weekend! Take it with you. You've still got time. I'd love to see you use it on something." "You know what? I think I'll take Friday off and do just that." "Well good luck, happy birthday, and don't cut yourself."

I hung up the phone, brought the knife downstairs, and slipped it into the pocket of my hunting pants. I spent the rest of the evening touching up my broadheads, waxing my bow string, and washing my fleece hunting suit.

I couldn't wait for Friday to arrive. When it did, winter had come with it. I woke up well before my alarm, drove to my favorite piece of public land, and stomped off into the darkness with an eagerness I hadn't felt since opening day. The temperature was in the low 20s, there was a foot of snow on the ground, and the wind burned my face and neck with every gust but none of that mattered. I was in the woods with a longbow in my lap and a new knife on my hip.

Life couldn't have been any sweeter. 

Welcome New Members And Those That Have Been Away...

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8-Point Buck

by Terry Folts

On November 5 at 8:15 am I got a second chance at "Ole Paleface." I named this buck "Paleface" when he was a small deer because of the grey muzzle he had even at a young age. I think it has something to do with the white gene I see in the does and other bucks from time to time around here. I have even seen a doe with white down the back of both rear legs that made her stand out. Sadly, I haven't seen her in a few years. I'm not sure what ever happened to her. I had come to recognize a particular doe and a 4-point buck by the white dot on their muzzle. I kept thinking to myself, if I give the 4-point a few years he would be a cool deer to harvest. That white dot would make for a great mount.

I climbed into my stand about an hour before daylight on a Sunday morning. The day started to break and the anticipation started to rise as I had been seeing deer regularly at this stand location. I'd had encounters here with some nice bucks and several visits from does as

well as smaller bucks. Just the day before Ole Paleface gave me the slip having shot under him at 15 yards. I did graze his belly hair because he ducked at the shot, otherwise I would have missed by a mile.

The stand I am sitting in is on a small parcel of land I have permission to hunt. It is not a place you would expect to hold any deer let alone *mature* deer, but over the last several years I have had close encounters with some really nice bucks. I have even been blessed to take a few. In this spot I used to shoot 1½- or 2½-year-old deer until I discovered that it was holding deer that were much older. About six or seven years ago I had a 14-point come in broadside at 15 yards, and I shot over his back. He never flinched. I think he must have seen me shoot, (laughing). I am sitting between a river and a bedding area with a stand of white oaks to my north about 60 yards. The deer cross the river from a large parcel of land that no one hunts. The owners do not hunt nor do

they allow hunting. The deer cruise and feed through the oaks making their way to the bedding area.

It had been less than 24 hours since "Ole Paleface" had given me the slip when a doe came milling her way toward me from the oaks. She is in front of me browsing so I turn on the cell phone that I have rubber banded to a tree step to take poor-man videos. The shot never materialized so after a short time I turned it off to save battery life. Then I hear a grunt coming from the same direction the doe came from. My heart rate starts to increase and the adrenaline starts racing through my veins. I gathered my composure and turn on my cellphone's camera. I quietly picked up my longbow and prepared for a possible shot. I moved ever so cautiously so as not to be detected by the doe. All of her attention seemed to be focused in the direction of the buck sounds as he continued to grunt his way to her. She locked on to him which gave me easy opportunity to get into shooting position. The doe was standing between me and a pile of brush, intently watching the buck approach. He gets a bit too close and she hops to the other side of the brush pile. At that moment I drew my bow, hitting anchor as I concentrated on the spot I wanted to hit. The buck was slightly quartering away with his full attention focused on the doe. Unconsciously the string slipped from my fingers sending the arrow on its way. The broadhead struck the buck just above mid-body exiting low and tight behind the opposite front leg. The arrow passed completely through the deer, sticking into the dirt. The buck did a mule kick and raced off.

As I stood there watching him run away, I couldn't help but wonder if it would be a quick, clean kill. I looked down at the doe who must have been wondering why he just ran off. After I gathered myself, I took the cell phone off its makeshift holder, and played the video back to



see the point of impact. I was hoping to see the perfect hit before I decide whether to track or wait. Upon review, I can see the camera just doesn't give me all the information I was hoping for. Fact is, it barely catches the impact which leaves me unsure of the hit. I waited about 30 minutes before getting down and looked at my blood-soaked arrow. There is very little blood on the ground as I began to follow the buck. I get about 15 yards from the shot where the buck crossed a little lane, and still there is little blood to be found. It was then that I decided to go back to my stand. It was early and I had plenty of time to wait. I looked back at my initial text and figured it was about 8:15 am when I shot the buck. It was now 9:58. I callws a buddy to tell him that I was going to start tracking. He offered to come help but I would have to go pick him up since his truck was at my place from the night before. (Long story). I

determined his help would be worth the trip and picked him up. On our way back we grabbed something to eat in order to give the buck ample time to expire. We returned a few hours later to pick up the trail. There was still precious little blood to be found so we tracked the deer's hoof prints the best we could, moving slowly and cautiously. After about 70 yards we looked up and I saw my deer. He is dead. When we got to him I bent down to pick up his rack and noticed that he was already stiff. The buck must have died within seconds of my

shooting him. There wasn't much blood on the trail leading to him but there was blood all over the place where he laid. We took some pictures and field dressed him for the drag out. It sure was nice to share the experience with another person and to have help with the dragging too!

I am shooting a Huron Longbow that I made. 50# shooting a 400 spine gold tip arrow with a 200 grain single bevel cutthroat broad head. Stand height 12 feet, shot distance about 12 yards.



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 4 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 in the spring 2018 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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Dream-to-Journey

by Dorothy McElroy

"Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship, which struggles on in the survivor's mind toward some final resolution, some clear meaning, which it perhaps never finds."

— Robert Woodruff Anderson

My son and I have started living a dream that we would like to share. This is the dream-to-journey of World Dragon Shooting Day and the Dancing Arrow Club.

I am a 54-year-old widow with a twelve-year-old son. I am learning to live life with a new normal as I try to reinvent myself and juggle the daily school schedule for me and my son. One important lesson I have learned is that moments matter more than clean laundry or a cluttered house. The world needs beginnings and people need new beginnings (AT LEAST I HOPE SO). I strive to be one of those people who embrace the new—complete the experience—and then push it out into the world where it can make a difference.

My husband passed away on March 8, 2013 from a cerebral hemorrhage. Our son Wyatt was seven years old at the time. One of the things he needed most in coping was continuity. Prior to his death my husband Dennis, with lim-

ited mobility due to multiple health issues, had been an archer for many years. This was a sport he shared with Wyatt since age four; something they often did together especially because it could be done sitting down. One week after we said our final goodbyes I took Wyatt to an archery open house with his dad's bow; I needed an umbrella of his father's memory to encompass him. I had never held or shot a bow before. The first half hour or so at the club, I watched Wyatt shoot and helped him listen to the range captain explain the ins and outs of an indoor range. There were a few other men there as well, and they in turn offered suggestions and helped him shoot. They were very patient and always had a smile for my high-spirited boy.

They asked Wyatt all kinds of questions about himself; "What grade are you in?" "What's your favorite subject in school?" "What do you like to do in your spare time?" "How

about your dad, does he like to shoot?" Wyatt looked at me. I looked back at him. It was then that Wyatt told them about Dennis, "My dad died yesterday." Perhaps it seemed like yesterday to Wyatt. Time just has a way of slowing, if not stopping at certain times. They looked at me and I nodded, "His dad died a week ago, not yesterday like Wyatt said. It's been kind of a blur for both of us; we just wanted to do something his father loved, so here we are." Wyatt and the men helping him went back to practicing, and their voices faded in the background. For some strange reason I thought of Gene Hackman in the movie, *I Never Sang for My Father*, and how he says both at the beginning and end of the film, "Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship..." I think that is what Wyatt and I were pursuing through sharing something his father loved so much, an ongoing relationship with the person we had just lost through this special activity. We weren't here just for ourselves; we were here for all three of us.

It was soon my turn to try. I took the bow in my hand and imitated what I saw the compound shooters do. My confidence got me out there. I couldn't make up for not knowing what I was doing and I was undone by the simplest of things, like not keeping both eyes open (now if that isn't a metaphor for a lot of life I don't know what is!) "As a beginner, perhaps you should use a compound bow." "Huh, what? The easy way out? Sure doesn't sound like ME!" Motivated by the experience as I was, I started reading everything I could get my hands on about traditional archery. There was so much to appreciate, so much to experience. I just wanted to lose my novice status as soon as possible.

A few months after we started shooting bows, Wyatt was able to attend a weekend grief camp. When I picked him up, he told me the coolest part was an activity where partici-



pants were able to create a unique holiday for the loved one they lost. He decided he wanted dragon day, where thousands of archers would slay dragons and help raise money for other people. In the meantime you may be asking why Wyatt chose dragons. Dennis was one of the original artists with "Dungeons and Dragons," the role playing game; and everyone has a dragon to slay, right? "But mom, he said with those hazel eyes of his staring at me, the other kids told me it was just a dream and dreams never come true." Hmm. Wanna bet kid? This pivotal moment, when Wyatt had his dream and I was on a mission to help him cope and heal, was when we both were looking at a new target. Why not do it through archery as Dragon Shooting Day?

On March 8, 2014 exactly a year after we said goodbye to Dennis, we welcomed 116 archers to the club that we first went to that week after Dennis died and raised \$800 for the grief camp that Wyatt had attended. We used pictures of dragons that students at Wyatt's school had drawn in a contest. After the week-

end of shooting was over, we wrote letters to Dennis on balloons and released them, "so Dad would hear all about his first dragon's shoot." I posted pictures and explained Wyatt's dream on my personal Facebook page the next day. Within four hours my post had over 30 shares from other archers I had friended over the past year, and 15 new friend requests from archers overseas. One of these archers asked if we would be willing to hold a global shoot next year and that they wanted to participate; this request was from the island of Gozo. Quick to follow was another from Malta, five from Greece, then more from Romania, South Australia, and Poland. Now we were looking at "World Dragon Shooting Day!" It seems like a dream doesn't it? But dreams can and do come true!

You may wonder how all of this helped Wyatt. I knew from the positive change I saw in my son that Wyatt was on to something in terms of healing. He was calmer, his periods of mourning were less frequent, and he had something of his Dad's that he could hold onto instead of his hand. Children grieve differently than adults. They do it in spurts. One minute they are fine, the next minute tears flow and memories overcome them. Then like a faucet, they turn off and are fine again. It is a gift. They seem to be able to strike a balance so as not to be overcome and undone. For example, Wyatt has a dragon necklace he wears that carries some of his Dad's ashes. Someone at the club commented on it and my son replied, "Oh, allow me to introduce you to my Dad, Dennis." It's a comment worthy of a child, disarmingly so. As adults we tend to cling to the, "If only I had said this, or done that." Children tend to see the good that was, instead of the things that no longer are. Wyatt smiled when asked about his early success at shooting, telling the older men that was because his father was guiding every one of his arrows for him and



that's why he was shooting so well. I smiled brightly while trying to hold back tears. We were on our way to healing.

During the course of these last four years, we have had numerous newspaper, radio, internet interviews, a podcast and just recently we taped our first television interview. While we were taping the TV show, I watched my young eleven-year-old son, tell David the interviewer that he can't believe all the archers that have participated. Those who have written to him and have gifted him with targets because he is just one young boy and doesn't see himself any different than the one next to him. He said, "I just want to impact the world, one arrow at a time, to honor my Dad and make a difference in someone else's life at the same time."

Looking back four years ago, actually it seems like an eternity, I asked Wyatt if he wanted to go to the hospital and say goodbye to his Dad or if he wanted to remember him the way he was before leaving for school. I was proud when he decided to say goodbye to his Dad. He continues to amaze me with his passion, empathy, and the innocent manner in which he sees the world. Wyatt explained that his motto, which he wrote at the age of nine is, "One of the wonders of life is making other people's life wonderful." When I watched him talk during the interview I saw the grief that still encompasses him, but doesn't direct him: it drives him. It pushes him forward and he embraces the uniqueness of himself that death tried to make him lose. Wyatt struggles with grief every day but he doesn't live in the moment and those moments do not define who he is. Wyatt



found his resolution in dragons and arrows. He is definitely impacting the world one arrow at a time and I found my dream in his wake, through archery.

Let's jump a few years to this past June 2017. We held a World Dragon Shooting Day in Temperance, Michigan and had 7,000 archers from 70 countries and 40 states participating. We had three other dragon shoots in Wisconsin. Overall, we raised \$13,000 dollars for four families who were either fighting cancer, had lost parents, or a spouse. I kept thinking, this is from one little boy's dream!

The impact of all this in my personal life has been overwhelming. I recently had the honor of gratefully accepting the local AAUW (American Association of University Women) scholarship. Receiving this award was very humbling and I feel extremely fortunate to receive it. College for many is a natural step after high school. For some it is an entitlement and for others it is a tightrope walk between work and finance. College for me at this point in my life is a new beginning in the pursuit of a dream. Being a non-traditional student has its perks. I have found out my peers like to hang out with the older lady because she does not judge or preach but rather is accepting. Last semester I was able to achieve my Grief Support Specialist Certification from UW of Madison. I am very excited to be able to build on this with a degree or dare I say, multiple degrees. In addition, I became a level two archery instructor, meaning I instruct instructors as well as coach children. I have my National Archery in the Schools/Basic Archery Instructor's Certification, (NASP/BAI), I am a

level one Mounted Horse archery instructor with the Horse Archery USA (HAUSA), and I am a S3DA Scholastic archery coach. This means I can take children from any school and use an archery club as a home base for archery related activities. In order to get these accreditations I also had to become certified in SafeSport, which is a certification designed to be watchful for child predators and be aware of any physical and/or emotional abuse students may be experiencing.

I am now in my sophomore year at UW Sheboygan and I want to specialize in grief therapy for children. In the summers I volunteer at grief camps where I offer "The Dancing Arrow Club"



free of charge to hospice centers and schools. This is the club I created and designed where I teach grief therapy through archery. This goal of mine had to come in stages before I could actively share what I had been doing with Wyatt. My plan was to become a level one instructor with USAA and then start to teach archery to other children who were grieving a loss. The Dancing Arrow Club, which is a United States Archery Association sanctioned club (USAA), was born out of necessity when I could not find a grief center for Wyatt. I needed something that was available every week, not every two weeks or once a month. Archery was his and our grief therapy. Paulo Coelho, in his book, *The Way of the Bow* states, "Each arrow leaves a memory. It is the sum of those memories that will make you shoot better and better." Is it not

the same with grief? Maybe the more memories and emotions we allow ourselves to embrace can be our arrows from which we release from our bow? When I am shooting archery, I have a quiver that holds my arrows on my side or thigh. Wyatt wears his on his back. How many of us wear our burdens on our back? When Wyatt pulls an arrow out his quiver, he is not only relinquishing his body of less weight, he is also getting ready to nock (what we call putting the arrow on the string) another emotion and let it fly. When a child gets ready to shoot, I tell them to breathe in while they are drawing the string to their anchor point, remember a sad moment and release that thought and their breath at the same time they release the arrow. It sounds fairly simple doesn't it?



Upcoming Shoot Schedule

Please contact sticktalkeditor@yahoo.com if your club is hosting a traditional shoot that you would like included in STICKTALK

Date	Event	Location	Contact
1/26-1/28	Kalamazoo Traditional Bowhunters Expo	Kalamazoo, MI	Bob Brumm www.gnqco.com
2/3	3 rd Annual Squirrel and Rabbit Tournament	Alto, MI	Sheri (269) 953-5480
2/10	MLA Winter Awards Banquet	Fowlerville, MI	Steve Chappell (517) 896-1626
5/4-5/6	MLA Spring Shoot and Membership Meeting	Fenton, MI	John Buchin (269) 217-5611 Rob Jones (616) 490-7212
5/4-5/6	20 th Annual Tennessee Classic	Chapmansboro, TN	Mailing Address (correspondence only): Twin Oaks Bowhunters 4435 Ashland City Road, Clarksville, TN 37043
5/25-5/27	Marshall Primitive Archery Rendezvous	Marshall, MI	Source: https://www.facebook.com/MarshallPrimitiveArcheryRendezvous
6/14-6/17	Compton Traditional Bowhunters Rendezvous	Berrien Springs, MI	www.comptontraditionalbowhunters.com
6/23-6/24	Michigan Traditional Bowhunters Jamboree	Grayling, MI	Dick Gardner (616) 238-6393
7/6-7/8	Michigan Bow Hunters Rendezvous	Harrison, MI	michiganbowhunters.com
7/12-7/15	Pine Hill Traditional Shoot	Kennerdell, PA	www.pinehillsportsman.org
7/13-7/15	Barryton Stick Bow Shoot	Barryton, MI	Doug Jackson (989) 644-5920
7/13-7/15	Tuscola County Archers	Caro, MI	
7/26-7/29	Eastern Traditional Archery Rendezvous	Ulysses, PA	(814) 435-6653 or archeryfestivals@hughes.net
8/3-8/5	Pine River Stick Bow Shoot	Elm Hall, MI	Brent Singer (989) 436-1075 or brentsinger17@yahoo.com Brian Rockafellow brockafellow@liquipak.com
8/9-8/12	Great Lakes Longbow Invitational	Hastings, MI	John Buchin (269) 217-5611 Rob Jones (616) 490-7212
8/24-8/26	Lapeer Bowmen's Traditional Archery Rendezvous	Attica, MI	Lapeer Bowmen Facebook page



Small Windows

by Don Grice

I climbed into my tree stand and reflected on the day; it was a whirlwind from start to finish. Get up, walk the dogs, go to church, drive to Mt. Pleasant for a visit with my daughter, then head home to get ready for a new work-week. As I headed east on M-20 I glanced at the time and realized that if I didn't lollygag, I might have a small window of time to sneak in an afternoon hunt. We weren't in the truck 10 minutes and Diana had already drifted off, so I had my chance. "East bound and down." Flashes of Smokey and the Bandit came to mind, "we've got a long way to go and a short time to get there," Jerry Reed was singing loud and proud in my head... In order not to incriminate myself I will fast forward (pun intended) back to my climb into the tree stand.

What a day I thought as I reached the platform; I reflected about all the hunts I had been on with my father as a young lad. It sure felt different back then at least from a kid's per-

spective. We didn't have to rush around to fit in a small window of time. I remember taking a full week off to head north with 700,000 other hunters in quest of the whitetail. I often remember getting stuck on NB I-75 because the Zilwaukee Bridge had to open for a slow moving freighter. People actually got out of their cars in the middle of the highway to stretch their legs and exchange hunting locations with each other while the ship floated by. No one appeared to be in a hurry; my how times have changed. Now all I had were small windows of time to hunt between chores and obligations.

I finally settled into my seat with just over an hour of daylight remaining. I typically wouldn't even bother trying to hunt with this much daylight left, but it was a beautiful afternoon and I thought an hour of downtime would do me some good. As it turns out, downtime wasn't what Mother Nature had in mind that day. I had just finished pulling up my longbow when I

heard a loud snapping sound just to the south. My eyes desperately searched for the source of the sound. After a thorough scan of the area I dismissed it as nothing and went back to reflecting on the day. Then I heard something again; this time my instincts engaged and I was convinced something was out there. About that same time I realized I didn't even have my shooting glove on yet, so I fished in my pocket without taking my eyes off the horizon. Slowly my eyes focused in on a deer approximately 40 yards away looking in my direction. I couldn't tell if it was a shooter, but either way I felt completely unprepared to execute a shot. I cautiously put my glove on and reached to pull my bow off the hook. As the deer finally broke from its frozen state I could see it had a respectable rack. It appeared to be heading in my direction so I slowly stood to prepare for a shot. We have all seen the slow, methodical way a mature whitetail moves through the woods. One step at a time constantly checking the wind and looking for the slightest hint of a threat. To my surprise he kept coming; closer and closer, 30 yards and closing. Then suddenly he froze again peering over his back. I became concerned that something or someone was going to interrupt our encounter. As he continued checking his surroundings I realized I hadn't even nocked an arrow yet, so I quickly glanced down and pulled #1 from my quiver. After what seemed like an eternity he turned back in my direction and rescanned his previously intended route. One step at a time, slowly advancing. My heart began to race as I realized he may actually walk within shooting distance. I quickly scanned his projected path for a small window through the foliage where it looked like I might be able to slip an arrow into his vitals. Slowly he moved forward as my eyes went from one small window to another. Finally everything came together. I don't really remember releasing the



arrow, but I remember seeing the white and green fletching reach its mark. The woods exploded with crashing sounds as he turned and disappeared in the same direction from where he came. I couldn't believe it, I looked at my phone and realized that I had only been in the woods for 35 minutes. After a few hours my son Justin and I got on the trail and located the buck approximately 100 yards away.

Perhaps times are different now, maybe people are busier than they were back when I was a kid or perhaps I just have a different perspective now that I'm the adult with all of the chores and obligations. Either way, look for the small windows and never assume that there's no point in making your way to the woods. Mother Nature will always bless you with solitude, beauty, and occasionally meat for the table. Take whatever time you are blessed with to engage in this passion we so love.





The Least Amazing Part

by Kelly Sauter

I shot a deer with my longbow. The guy down the street tells me that is quite a feat. He is some marketing bigwig for a few different archery and bowhunting magazines. According to him, being a female and hunting with a longbow puts me in a rare 5 percent of hunters, but being a successful female longbow hunter now that drops it well under 1 percent.

I've got to admit it felt pretty great; there is no question I am proud. But it's not the deer I'll remember. It's not the moment her head sprang up and our eyes met or how good the jerky turned out. It's not the split second I followed the fletchings with my gaze as I released and immediately questioned if the shot was too far back that I will replay in my head with a smile. When I serve venison to guests I won't recall sitting on that overturned 5-gallon bucket for a total of 19 hours four days into the season or the two deer I spooked during those hours before coming to full draw.

Rather the memory that is fixed in my mind, the one I hope lasts until the end of time, is of

three head lamps bouncing down the trail with laughter and shouting ricocheting off the trees in the dark. It's of Banks (5), Taylor (5), and Peyton (7) calling out, "Did you get a deer?" as they make their way with their dads to the spot they'd hiked to with me 20 times in the last month to check the trail camera. I'll remember their smiles when one of them was picked to stand guard over the crimson droplets on the decaying ferns until we adults called out we'd found another; then we enlisted the next child to come to the front for his turn. It's Taylor in tears because she lost her shoe the same moment we reach the doe, lifeless on the ground. It's the hug from my cousin, the girls' dad, telling me it's his favorite hunt he has ever been a part of that I'll always treasure. It's the look in my husband's eyes as he grins and says "good job" as we all stand over the deer. It's noticing Taylor still crying, now about the deer blood and insisting she be in the photo to document that they were all there. It's recalling my son asking me five times throughout the cleaning



process if we can keep the deer's eyeball that will keep me grinning. It's the next day picking

the girls up from school and hearing how they told their whole class about their adventure in the woods the night before and being grateful they weren't acting tired from their after-bedtime escapade. What I'll always remember is my cousin asking if he can give my son his hunting knife that he used to teach me how to clean the deer and my son asking if it was his to keep. These are the memories imprinted on my heart.

So the next time I bump into the neighbor guy up at the small town hardware and he pats me on the back for my accomplishment, I'll tell him that shooting a deer with my longbow was the least amazing part.



The Michigan Longbow Association Winter Awards Banquet

Once again we are preparing for an awesome night on February 10, 2018 at the MLA Winter Awards Banquet. This event will be held at Woodshire Banquet Hall in Fowlerville, Michigan. Tickets are available on the MLA website (www.michiganlongbow.org) as well as the Kalamazoo Expo.

The Winter Awards Banquet is one of only two fund-raising events for the MLA, so please bring your items both new and used to be auctioned or raffled off. This is a great opportunity to give back to the archery club that has given you so much. Banquet tickets are still \$20 per seat, which is less than the cost per plate that we are charged.

We have noticed that a number of members are bringing appetizers for the people sitting at their table. What a great idea!! As always, coffee and water will be provided. Please bring your own beverages. If consuming alcohol, please drink responsibly.

Many will also want to bring a dessert to

enter in the dessert contest for a cash prize. Woodshire Hall does not provide desserts, so please bring a dessert to share even if you are not entering the contest. If you are entering, please have your dessert at the banquet by 5:30 for judging. Cash prizes are: \$75 for first place, \$50 for second, and \$25 for third.

The arrow contest is on again as well! The contest will be of three like-made (identical) arrows. If you choose to display them in any form, the display itself will NOT be considered as part of the judging. Judging will take place after dinner, by a silent vote, and winners will be announced as part of the awards portion of the banquet. All entries will then be auctioned off during the auction. Cash prizes are: \$75 for first place, \$50 for second, and \$25 for third. Let's see those beautiful arrows!

That does it! Come prepared to have a great time! Doors open at 4 pm for social hour and dinner begins at 6 pm. Can't wait to see you all there!





The Gift Buck

by Steve Angell

The traditional bowhunting community has bestowed numerous gifts upon me over the years, most are more spiritual in nature: a kind gesture, an offer of assistance, a bowhunting tale or a campfire yarn. Yet, perhaps some of the most special gifts I have received are those of friendships. I have made quite a few along my traditional journey.

This story begins in March of 2017. I was invited to participate in an annual hunt that takes place along the Savannah River basin of South Carolina. This particular hunt is known as "Camp Ambush" by the annual participants. The real bonus for me was the good fortune to share in the birthday of my good friend, Thom Jorgensen, which happened to occur during this hunt. Over the course of that week, we shared many stories and laughs from adventures past. Thom and I even managed to spend a few mornings still hunting together through the swamps. As luck would have it, I took my first spot-and-stalk hog while still hunting through the swamps with Thom that week.

While I did not know it at the time, this would be the last camp I would share with our close mutual friend Andrew Harper. Andrew would be taken from

us prematurely later in the year in a swimming accident. For so many reasons, this ended up being a hunt I will never forget.

On the last day of the hunt, Thom and I were lounging in the bunk house discussing the week's events. Soon we were discussing future hunts and mainly his planned hunt to Africa later in the year. During the conversation, Thom pointed towards his gear lying neatly in the corner. There, along with his normal gear, was a huge collection of wood arrows and arrow shafts. I had spied them during the week but at the time did not know if Thom had brought them, or if perhaps one of the other members of camp had brought them. Thom explained that he had acquired these shafts over many months. He had been on a quest for a wood arrow that would meet his strict expectations for tuning and performance. The quest had not been a fruitful one, and he had decided that carbon shafts were what worked best for him. He followed up with how they were all heavy-spined, and he was sure I could find a use for them. With that, in typical Thom fashion, they were now my property. Thom just has a way of saying things in a manner that seems to make things

"fit." So, into the truck they went, and Thom seemed happy to have one less thing to try and bend to his will.

Flash forward several months. I am attending our local Traditional Archery club's monthly 3D shoot. Another good friend, Beecher DuVall, comes up to me and greets me with the customary handshake. Beecher is one of those people that has never met a stranger. He has a personality that draws you into his company. I always make a point to have a lengthy chat with him every chance I get. We talked for several minutes, and he asked me to accompany him to his vehicle. He reached into the back and hauled out what appeared to be a gray, woolen bow sock. However, it is only about 30" long, and I am not sure what he is about to show me. He hands it to me and in a matter-of-fact manner states: "This should belong to someone who will appreciate and shoot it." I opened the sock to find a beautiful two-piece longbow crafted by Jay St. Charles. Mr. Duvall explained that he acquired the bow as part of a trade and that the 69# was just too much for him. He knew that Jay and I were good friends. He also knew I loved shooting Jay's bows and leaned towards heavier draw weights. Just like that, the 64" Pacific Yew beauty was mine. He would not discuss any trades or money, and I left him with "I will definitely take a deer with this bow come fall."

A few months later and it is a crisp, late-October morning not yet touched by the light of day. I am sitting in my stand in the pitch-black darkness waiting for the first glimpse of light. I always enjoy the mornings when I arrive to my spot earlier than normal—surrounded by darkness, void of the visual distractions that derail attempts at inner reflection. On mornings like this, I have nothing but my thoughts and the anticipation of what the day may bring. Soft sounds surrounded me. I could hear a breeze rustling the leaves. I heard the faintest murmur of water cascading along rounded stones in the small creek below me. Now and then, I would hear the thump of an acorn as it settled on the forest floor. My thoughts

turned to a hunting trip in Michigan with good friends just a few weeks away. I am not sure how long I contemplated my mental check list for the hunt before a rustle in the leaves above me and to my left startled me from my thoughts. A squirrel was waking up, and I realized the sky had turned from black to a soft, faint blue.

On a sawed-off limb to my right hung "Wapiti," the two-piece take down longbow. Inside the quiver are two "Superceder" wood arrows from the pile of shafts Thom had given me back in March. I pulled the leather glove from my pocket and slipped it onto my fingers. Next, I retrieved the bow and placed it onto my lap and nocked an arrow. For me, hunting is mostly a private matter. Today, I smiled at the thought of both Thom and Beecher being with me that morning as night surrendered to the day.

Sometime around 9 a.m. that morning I caught a strange movement about 60 yards to my left. I stared into the trees straining my eyes to pick apart each limb, leaf and twig. I needed to see what it was that had caught my attention. Then, I noticed a horizontal line and then a small patch of white. Slowly, a form materialized: a deer. My first thought was "where did you come from;" my second was "WOW, that is a nice buck!" I raised my binos and continued to pick apart the cover and finally managed to get a decent look at the buck. It was at least an 8, maybe a 10 with long tines and thick bases. His neck was swollen, and he was twisting a small sapling in his horns. For the next 5 minutes, I watched him mill around. His body angled away from me, and I doubted he would come my direction without some coaxing. My only option was to blow a soft grunt from my call. No reaction. I waited 'til he lowered his head and tried again, this time with a bit more force. Again, no reaction. Rather than do more harm than good, I slipped the call back into my pocket and waited. After another five minutes or so passed, he turned about and headed off in the opposite direction, never coming closer than 50 yards. I immediately decided I was going to wait ten to fifteen minutes and try some

light rattling. I hoped I could bring him back. Based on his gate he was in no hurry when he left and seemed to have no real purpose. So, maybe.

Lightly tickling the antler tines and twisting one antler with another does not make a lot of sound. I knew it was still way too early to make much noise with the horns. I hoped it would be enough and wondered if he was close enough to even still hear me. With the horns back in my pack I stared intently into the thick cover in front of me. I wanted to see any movement that would indicate he had returned. I scanned back to my left to see if perhaps he would return using the same path he had left on. Just as I was about to start scanning back to the right I detected movement. There was a buck. Not the buck I was trying to call back but another buck had heard the sound. This new buck was coming in my direction to investigate. His body was large; he was sporting a medium size 5 x 5 rack and my grip tightened on the handle of my bow.

I soon realized there might be a problem. If he continued on the path he is on, he would pass directly underneath my stand. Part of me worried this would result in his catching wind of me before I could take a shot. Then almost as if reading my thoughts, he turned to his right which would bring him right by the tree I was in. I was still a bit concerned though because he would be close, within 5 yards of the base of my tree. Not the best shot angle. Immediately I started going through the numbers in my head. The bow was heavy enough, the arrow even heavier at over 800 grains. The broadhead was sharp, very

sharp in fact. I knew what I had to do and immediately locked my stare on to a spot at the top of the buck's shoulder blade. If he continued on his course I knew I could slip the arrow right into the top of his shoulder. The plan was formulated, now just a few more steps.

Without ever taking my eye off the spot I had selected I watched as the feathers disappeared into the top of the buck. In an instant he did an about face and retreated along the same exact path I had watched him come in on. I watched him as far as the terrain would allow. Then I listened to the sound as heavy hooves clambered through the leaves. Then silence. My eyes immediately returned to the area of impact and there I see my arrow. The front two thirds was impaled into terra firma, the back third lying on the ground a couple feet away. Just a few feet from there I could make out the trail the buck left during his retreat. Experience tells me the trail will not be long, or difficult, to follow.

Perhaps some of the most special gifts I have received are those of friendships. I have made quite a few along my traditional journey. Two close friends were miles away from me that morning. Still, through their generosity they were both right there beside me. The best gift was not the material items they had given to me—the bow and the arrow that I used that morning. The real gift was that they will both be forever tied to the memories of that wonderful hunt on October 22, 2017.

It just doesn't get any better than that. 



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One More Arrow

by Matt Wirwicky

"And here we are, Deer Season is finally here. Even though the late September heat wave had us wondering, Fall seems a bit early this year. The late heat and lack of rain dried up the soybeans very early. Farmers are racing to harvest their beans. I remember the beans were still up well into October last season. How might the early harvest affect the deer herd where I hunt, I ask myself. The near future will tell and hopefully, I'll be writing about a successful archery harvest in the next issue."

miles away sent me a text warning me of a storm that was headed my way. I just got settled in the ladder stand so, I thought that I'd tough it out. In a matter of a minute or so, the clouds opened up and seemingly buckets of rain poured out of the turbulent sky. The lightning cracked nearby which changed my mind from toughing it out to getting the hell down. I walked through the muddy field with all my gear and took shelter in my truck. Hunting ended that afternoon, earlier than I had planned.

I am blessed to be able to hunt my good friend's property. Typically, there's little pressure from surrounding neighbors, the deer are plenty and the bucks are impressive. All during the first 5 weeks or so of bow season, we noticed that the deer sightings were way down. I myself seemed to see the same small buck and three does, time after time. I did have a rushed opportunity at the small buck but,

The excerpt above is the last paragraph I wrote in the last STICKTALK issue. As dry as it was, I would not have believed that it turned out so wet. It seemed that every opportunity that I had to hunt whether it after work or on the weekends, it was wet. One weekend knowing that I was in a tree stand, my wife from 20

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clearly missed. In the seasons past, we enjoyed telling our stories of how many we'd seen and if there were any shot opportunities. This year seemed to be severely lacking. As it turns out, my friend bumped into his neighbor down the road. He mentioned that he'd seen several deer lying dead by the river. He also followed that the Michigan DNR confirmed that the EHD virus was affecting the area. The small buck and does were the only healthy deer we'd seen so, we decided to leave them to reproduce rather than harvest the deer and further decimate the local deer herd. Hopefully, ourselves and the DNR can get a handle on EHD, CWD and Bovine TB. We're losing a lot of deer either by the sicknesses themselves or the culling of the herd, because of them.

I was fortunate to be able to hunt a relative's farm on the extreme opposite side of the

county, for the remainder of the season. I didn't take any during the bow season but was able to contribute to the freezer some nice meat once gun season began. There isn't a good "bow" stand on the property. I am encouraged by the deer herd there and will be able to place a couple of bow-distance stands up for next season.

As I write, this season is not quite over. It's just a few days before Christmas. I'll be visiting the stand often with my firearm hoping to add a bit more to my freezer. Though the archery season was a down year for me, I still greatly enjoyed carrying my longbow afield. It's a feeling like no other and will continue until I can no more. Hopefully next year, I'll have a shot at MLA's Big Game Award.

See you at the MLA Banquet and at the Kalamazoo Expo!



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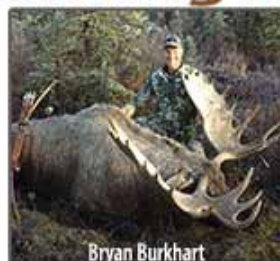
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