

The ATLATL

SUMMER 1990

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD ATLATL ASSOCIATION, INC.
1191 NUCLA STREET, AURORA, COLORADO 80011, USA

Editor: Bill Tate

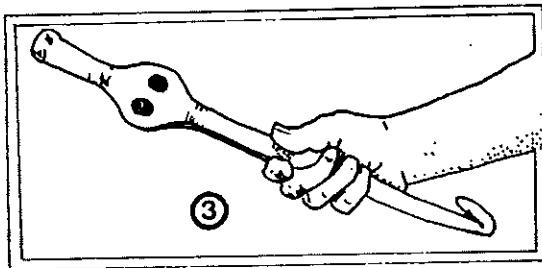
HUL-CHE

A re-discovered American Sport

The above title was given to a July, 1937 article in Popular Mechanics by Earl B. Powell.

It begins: "Reminiscent of the ancient Mayas who could throw a four and a half foot javelin with the speed and accuracy of a bullet, hul-che is the rediscovered method of throwing short spears and darts for sport's sake. Copied from specimens dredged from the sacred well at Chichen-Itza, the dart and thrower shown are made of hard wood, shaped and highly polished."

The short article goes on to refer to the "throwing stick or hul-che, such as shown in Fig. 3,..."



We wrote Popular Mechanics who declined us permission to reprint the old article, however those wishing to see it might find a copy in their city library.

Nowhere in the article is the word "atlatl" used, however the two page paper contains several drawings of the atlatl with detailed drawings and text on how to cast a dart with a hul-che as well as methods employed in building one.



The article closes by stating that: "With a little practice, you will be able to hit the target at 60 yards, time after time." (That will be the day!)

Left to themselves,
all things go from
bad to worse.

CONTEST WINNERS

The first of the seasons atlatl contests are now history and several new names have come into the limelight.

Utah Statewide Archaeological Society atlatl throw was held at historic old Fort Buenaventura in Ogden during their annual meeting Saturday, June 16, 1990.

Contest winners were:

Youth: Kevin Schmidt

Ladies: Elizabeth Zimmerman

Men: Kevin Jones (Assist. State Archaeologist

The USAS contest consisted of two long range targets for low score, a short range target for accuracy, plus the longest of two throws for greatest distance.

COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ENCAMPMENT

June 30, 1990

Held amid the pines and flowering sage at the Forest Service Camp grounds at Twin Lakes, near Leadville, Colorado and with near perfect weather, this was the fifth annual atlatl contest held by the group. As usual, the event was directed by WAA President, Leni Clubb.

The primary contest required use of primitive equipment only. No metal, plastic, fiberglass etc. Thirty-one contestants participated.

Men's Division:

- 1st TIM BOUCHER, Roaring Fork Valley Chapter
- 2nd BONEY COSYLEON, Pueblo
- 3rd DOUG BOWMAN, Hisatsinom chapter

Women's Division:

- 1st ELIZABETH ENGLISH non-member
- 2nd FRAN COSYLEON, Pueblo
- 3rd LENI CLUBB, Indian Peaks chapter

Youth (16 and under):

- 1st GABE COSYLEON, Pueblo
- 2nd TARA BRAMEL, Denver
- 3rd RACHAEL DORIA, Pikes Peak chapter

Children (10 and under):

- 1st RYAN ARBOGAST, non-member
- 2nd KEVIN ARBOGAST, non-member
- 3rd RACHAEL DORIA, Pikes Peak Chapter

GREATEST HONOR AWARD:

GABE COSYLEON

Note that this is the second time Gabe has beat out all the competitors to take this prize. He first won the five year old traveling trophy in 1987.

FREE FOR ALL CONTEST

Any Equipment allowed.

- 1st TIM BOUCHER
- 2nd KEITH ABERNATHY
- 3rd VINCE DORIA

ATLATL TAKES ON SUBARU

On April 8, 1990, following the quarterly business meeting of the Colorado Archaeological Soc., held in Los Animas, Colorado, twenty-five members engaged in a field trip to local sites. First on the agenda was a visit to the reconstructed "Bent's Old Fort," on the Arkansas River, followed by a trip back on dirt roads past wagon ruts of the Santa Fe Trail, and on to Vogel Canyon to view rock art and other aboriginal and historic remains.

It was while stopped at the wagon ruts that Don Tucker locked his keys in his car. For half an hour, he and wife, Jeanne struggled with clothes hangers and other items trying to break back into their late model Subaru to no avail.

Security expert, and CAS member, Larry Woods, suggested that they might "spring" their side window enough to reach in and flip the lock. With two sets of hands gripping the upper edge of the window and pulling outward they managed to make a half inch wide opening. This proved just enough to slide one of Keith Abernathy's atlatl darts through and across to the far side of the car to flip the lock proving that the atlatl is mightier than the Subaru. The day was saved, and we resumed our trek across southeastern Colorado to visit the Canyon. ON THE SPOT REPORTER,
BILL TATE.

Would you believe.....

According to Bob Perkins, Bozeman, Montana was picked as one of the top five places to live for having fun and being cool. One of the reasons given in the newspaper article was Atlatling!

ATLATL WEIGHTS

BILL TATE

Although the atlatl system was independently invented in various parts of the world, and has been in use for many thousands of years, apparently the "atlatl weight" is strictly a North American innovation.

Atlatl weights show up in archaeological contexts in excavations and as surface finds over much of the United States. Typically, those from the Colorado area are elongated heavy stones with a purposely flattened underside to fit snugly against the shaft of the atlatl. They are usually ground smooth and sometimes display one or more grooves cut into the rounded upper surface presumably to aid fastening them to the atlatl.

Atlatl weights recovered from the Magic Mountain site just west of Denver, Colorado by Cynthia Irwin-Williams and her brother Henry J. Irwin were described as follows:

"MM 120 "Atlatl weights"

The first object termed an "atlatl weight" is a fragment of an apparently oblong object, smoothly rounded on its dorsal

and lateral sides, flat and even on the bottom. It was fashioned by primary smoothing with a piece of rough sandstone, and secondary polishing with some finer material. Although the piece is very well made and quite symmetrical in form, the final polishing failed to obliterate the original abrasion marks. This abrasion was done longitudinally on the dorsal and lateral surfaces, but from side to side on the base. The base is also scored by a series of incisions, which may have been left by the abrader or may have been cut in later. They display no patterning. The piece was deposited during the Apex occupation of the site."



"Size and Weight: Length--1 3/8 inches
Width--7/8 in.
Weight--2.5 oz.

Material: Meteorite (?)
(Ed. Note: Apex time period is about 4900 years ago).

In 1975, Brad Stone found this atlatl weight at a site on a ranch near the Great Sand Dunes National Monument in south central Colorado. The stone is of undetermined fine grain dark material and is shown here life size in end view and underside.



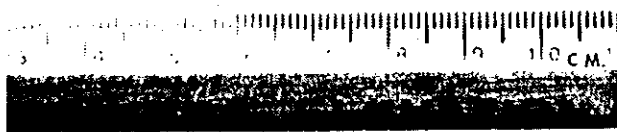
"Size: length (fragmentary)
1 1/8 inches.
width--3/4 inch.
Material: Basalt"

"The second atlatl weight is in many ways similar to the first. It is convex on its dorsal side, flat to very slightly convex on the ventral side. Its overall outline describes roughly a shortened ellipse. Its somewhat irregular form is due in part to the use of a small lump of heavy highly metallic material, probably a meteorite. Like the other specimen, it was fashioned by abrasion, and then polishing. The final polish is quite fine, obliterating most of abrasion marks. It belongs to the Apex Complex."



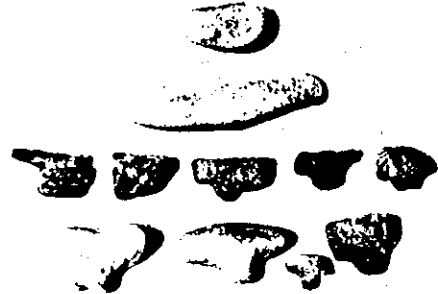
An atlatl weight turned up in a plowed field during the archaeological survey of the New Denver International Airport performed by Powers Elevation Co. of Aurora, Co.

This object, which weighs 32.5 grams, is 65 mm long by 19 mm wide and 14 mm thick. The artifact shape is an elongated symmetrical oval with a flat under-surface. It was shaped by abrasion and under low magnification some of the marks of the abrader are still visible, although most have been polished away. A single groove was carved into the upper surface near one end, presumably to help tie it into place on the atlatl shaft. Small "pock" mark type indentations occur at one end of the weight and on the top just behind the groove. The object is black with tan stoney inclusions and is weakly magnetic. Because of its



DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ATLATL WEIGHT
Top, side and bottom views.

iron/stone composition, the possibility of it being meteorite in origin was examined. It has since been identified by geologist, Kevin McKeown of the Community College of Aurora as Magnetite-Hornblende shist, a relatively common material from the mountains forty miles west.



STRANGE STONE OBJECTS FROM VIRGINIA

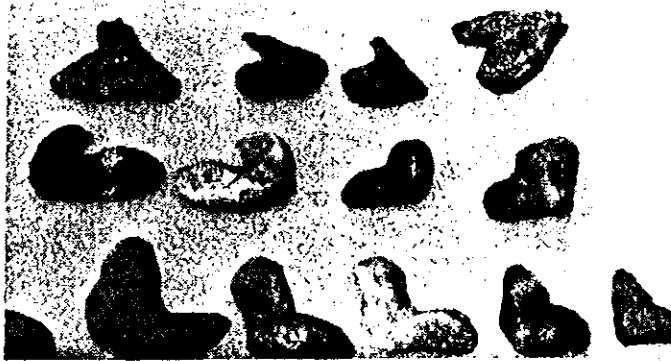
From another part of the country come reports of strangely, but purposely shaped stone objects. The finder is Allen Rowe of port Haywood, VA. The artifacts come from sites on the York and East Rivers. The material is mostly quartzites and cherts although some other stone is mentioned in the descriptions received. Weight of the questionable objects varies from 15 to 77 grams.



Some of the objects do resemble, and in fact, may be atlatl weights. The strange hook shaped stones or "L"

PHOTO BY BOB TATE

shaped are more of a puzzle. Others, those with drilled holes could be fishing weights.



Allen describes at least one of them as such. Your editor's guess is that most of these objects are weights for fish nets. Being angular, they could be tied to a net with little likelihood of their being lost. Possibly someone could help us determine just what these mystery stones really are.



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 28th Eastern Seaboard Atlatl contest. Contact Gary Fogelman, Indian Artifact magazine, Inc., RR 1, Box 240, Turbotville, PA 17772, Phone (717) 4373698.

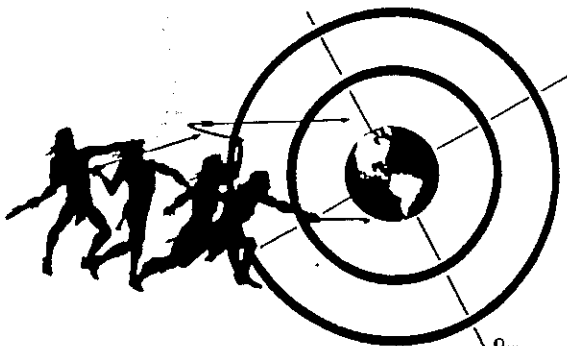
ATLTL WORLD OPEN - August 18th at Fort Caspar, Casper Wyoming. The all day event includes an evening talk at Casper College by Dr. Charles Reher, Associate professor, Anthropology Dept., the Univ. of Wyoming. For further details, please contact the Casper Chamber of Commerce, 500 North Center Street, Casper, WY 82601 phone (307) 234-5311

Second Annual Montana Atlatl Mammoth Hunt - Originally scheduled for the same date at the ATLTL WORLD OPEN, this event has now been rescheduled for a week later, August 25th. The event is to be held at 3212 York (or Lori) Road, Helena, MT 59604, or P. O. Box 5058. The sponsors are Manuel and Helen White, Bob Perkins, Paul Leininger and Dave Schwab. There will be a Barbecue, atlAtl exhibits, "bacon" shoot, distance throws and various primitive skills demos. Entry fee: Adults \$10.00, Under 16, \$5.00, \$3.00 for the barbecue.

"Target" date (no pun intended) for the Valley of Fire Atlatl throw is Sat. April 13, 1991. The Valley of Fire State Park

is located at Overton, Nevada, near Las Vegas and is the site of "Atlatl Rock," reported on in an earlier edition of the Atlatl. This Springtime competition should help prepare atlatlists for games later in the season. We look for a good turn out at this first of the '91 events.

T-SHIRTS



The WORLD ATLATL ASSOCIATION, Inc.

T-SHIRT DESIGN
(White on Black)

Order your official WAA T-Shirt now. These striking black with white design quality shirts will be available at the ATLATL WORLD OPEN for \$9.00 or can be ordered for \$9.00 plus \$1.00 shipping. Sizes available are: Small, Medium, Large and extra Large. Adult sizes only, no children's sizes available. Send orders to: Bill Tate, The World Atlatl Association, 1191 Nucla Street, Aurora, CO 80011

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T-SHIRT ORDER FORM

PLEASE SEND THE FOLLOWING OFFICIAL WAA T-SHIRTS TO THE ADDRESS BELOW:

WAA T-SHIRT
\$9.00 EACH!

QUANTITY	SIZE	SUBTOTAL
_____	S	_____
_____	M	_____
_____	L	_____
_____	XL	_____

Shipping: \$1.00 each shirt _____

TOTAL - - - - - _____

MAKE CHECKS OUT TO THE WORLD ATLATL ASSOCIATION.

T-SHIRTS TO BE MAILED TO:

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DUES ARE DUE FOR MANY WAA MEMBERS:
Please send your \$10.00 membership fee right away to:

The World Atlatl Association
8800 State Highway 133
Carbondale, CO 81623

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
PHONE _____ AMT. ENCLOSED _____

10% DISCOUNT

WAA members receive a 10% discount on their purchases from the following firms manufacturing atlats and related equipment:

TATE ENTERPRISES UNLIMITED,
INC. P. O. Box 110755, Aurora,
Colorado 80011.

Phone (303) 364-0059

Contact Tate enterprises for information on their "SpearChucker" kits, readymade equipment and instructional material.

BPS ENGINEERING, Box 797,
Manhattan, Montana 59741
Phone, (406) 2843307

BPS is the maker of the "Mammoth Hunter", the "Warrior", and other fine atlats and darts. Call or write for more information.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO WAA SECRETARY, CHARLEY LILLY FOR MAKING THE GREAT TARGETS FOR THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S ENCAMPMENT ATLATL COMPETITION. Charley couldn't be at the event, but provided the fancy targets anyway.

NOBODY'S PERFEC!

Bob and Paul of BPS made it into the national press again with their atlats. This time it's Black Belt Magazine. You might want to check out the current issue at your local news stand.

Bill and Marcia Tate along with WAA member and expert flint knapper Keith Abernathy have been doing Archaeology Day demonstrations around the state of Colorado. The Wray, Colorado library held theirs April 28th, and the City of Aurora held their second annual event on June 9th. We are really spreading the word about atlats in this way. We know others are doing the same thing and would like to hear about it.

The annual meeting of the World Atlatl Association was held June 30, 1990. The major items of business concerned the long awaited official WAA T-shirts, plans for the Valley of Fire atlatl games, and election of officers. The 1990 officers were continued on for another year.

**MANY THANKS TO
ALL OF THOSE
WHO SEND IN
NOTICES AND
ARTICLES FOR
INCLUSION IN
THIS
PUBLICATION.**

PLEASE KEEP THAT MATERIAL COMING IN. SEND IN SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THIS NEWSLETTER AS WELL. WE CAN USE ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.

Look for a great article on atlatl diffusion possibilities (real similarities between certain asian atlats and some from South America) addressed by Bob Perkins in the next issue.