

The **ATLATL**

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD ATLATL ASSOCIATION, INC.
1390 SOUTH PARIS COURT, AURORA, COLORADO 80012, USA



LAND OWNER AND HUNT ORGANIZER, STEVE COLEMAN,
LOU BECKER, AND RON RAPPAPORT WITH LOU'S KILL.

ATLATL BOAR HUNT by Lou Becker

● LOU BECKER, 1992

"What, you're going to use that thing to take a wild boar!" This was the common reaction that I received whenever I told people in Michigan about my plan to go wild boar hunting with the ancient atlatl (spear-thrower). However, I knew that like the longbow, the atlatl could be a very accurate and deadly weapon.

The atlatl was used in North America, and other parts of the world for thousands of years before the bow and arrow was invented. For instance, in my home state of Michigan, ancient Paleo-Indians used the atlatl over 15,000 years ago to hunt mammoth and mastodon (prehistoric elephants), and many other game species.

My interest in using the atlatl goes back to the early 1980s, about the time that the Michigan Longbow Association was being formed. I had always been interested in bows and arrows and

Indian history, however, it wasn't until I observed Norm Blaker, one of the founding fathers of the Michigan Longbow Association, using the atlatl to hit milk containers at about 30 yards, that I became a firm believer that the atlatl could be a very valuable hunting weapon.

Shortly after the above mentioned experience, I decided to experiment with different types of atlatls. After testing fifteen different designs, I developed an atlatl set that worked extremely well. In fact, it worked so well that I decided to add atlatl sets to my custom arrow business. I did this with the hope of offering the conventional archer an opportunity to participate in an interesting activity that really goes well with traditional archery.

In the early fall of 1991, I received a call from Steve Coleman. Steve runs a 600 plus acre hunting preserve near Vidalia, Georgia, and is also interested in atlatls and Indian history. When Steve told me that he planned to have an atlatl wild boar hunt, I jumped at the chance to be part of this historic hunt. We made plans for the second weekend of March, 1992.

When I told my bow hunting friend, Ron Rappaport, about the hunt, he also became very interested and decided to go with me. During the winter months, we practiced throwing darts with our atlatls two to three times a week. By March 11th, we felt ready to go after the hogs.

When we left Michigan on March 12th, the temperature was four degrees above zero. As we drove South through Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and finally into Georgia, the temperature had risen to 65 degrees.

We arrived at our destination, Buckhorn Creek Hunting Preserve, near Vidalia, Georgia at 3:00 p.m. on Friday March 13, 1992. Steve drove up on a four-wheeler, and we exchanged introductions. He then showed Ron and me around his preserve. I have always admired the people of the Deep South for their keen awareness of local history, their love of the outdoors, and their ability to live in harmony with nature. Steve showed all these fine qualities and more.

Steve explained to us that the original stock of wild hogs were brought to his area of Georgia by the early explorer, De Soto in the early 1500s. Some of these hogs escaped and later bred with domesticated hogs that the early settlers had released.

After showing us around the preserve, we exchanged notes on atlatls and threw darts at a hay target which Steve had erected. The difference in our atlatl designs was amazing. Steve's was patterned after the ancient Paleo-Indian design, with a heavy U-shaped weight near the handle. His darts were seven feet (213 cm.) long and weighed well over 3,000 grains (6.25 oz. or 194.4 grams) each. Ron and I were using atlatls that were a combination of Aztec and Late Woodland Indian designs. I had

patterned them from atlatls I had observed in museums and various Indian artifact books. Our darts were 7/16 inch (1.1 cm.), in diameter and five feet ten inches (177.8 cm.) in length. They weighed roughly 2,500 grains each (5.21 oz. or 162 grams). Both systems seemed to work very well, even when throwing into a stiff Georgia wind.

Later that evening, Steve and his wife Sharon, treated Ron and me to some real Southern hospitality--a wild hog dinner with all the trimmings.

Our boar hunt finally started shortly after first light on Saturday, March 14th. Steve, Ron, and I started to walk along a large field on the west end of the preserve. After about ten minutes, we spotted a group of 14 hogs. They seemed to be about 150 yards (137 Meters) away. Steve suggested that our best chance would be to try for a slow, quiet stalk. Slowly, ever so slowly, we began our stalk of the hogs. When we got to about 25 yards from the pigs, they became aware of our presence, and began to break into a run. By this time they were about 35 yards from Ron and me, and we did not want to make a wild throw for fear of just wounding one. Steve was on the far side of us and took a throw at a large boar 18 yards (16.5 meters) away. The heavy dart struck the boar square in the side and passed through the lungs. Penetration was about 42 inches (107 cm.) through the hog. Within 20 yards the boar dropped, and by the time Ron and I got to the downed boar, it was dead. Never in my 30 years of bow hunting had I seen an arrow put a big game animal down for keeps as quickly as Steve's 3,000 grain dart had.

After congratulating Steve and helping to retrieve his trophy, we decided to break for lunch and try for more hogs later in the afternoon. After lunch, we decided to hold an impromptu atlatl tournament. From 10, 15, 25, and 30 yards, we each threw five darts at a deer silhouette target, and then tallied up each score. It was amazing at how often each of us hit the vitals, even at the longer distances. The results gave Steve first place, me second, and Ron came in a close third.

About 3:30 in the afternoon, we proceeded to hunt the hogs once more. As in the morning, I carried four darts, two tipped with 190 gr. Jerry Hill Broadheads, and two tipped with 190 gr. Elburg Broadheads. Steve and Ron also used the 190 gr. Jerry Hill points. As we walked out onto the hunting area carrying our atlatls and darts, I thought about how we were actually recreating scores of prehistoric hunts that had taken place in North America thousands of years before Columbus discovered the New World.

We walked along a trail for about 200 yards when I noticed another group of hogs feeding in an open field. Steve agreed to circle around the hogs with the hope of driving them toward Ron and me. Steve waited until we had spread out about 40 yards from one another. Within ten minutes we were in position near a tree line on the far side of the field. As I looked toward my right,

I could see four of the hogs coming directly toward our position. When they were about 20 yards from me I stood up as silently as possible. The big sow in the lead became aware of my presence, snorted a couple of times and took off at a full run. Another smaller hog stood still at about 22 yards from me. Instantly, I drew my atlatl back behind my right shoulder and tried for a smooth, powerful throw. The 70 inch dart took off in a straight line, and as I watched the long, white fletching, I knew instinctively that I had made a good throw. The dart struck the hog high in the shoulder and penetrated a full 36 inches (91 cm.). I just could not believe the amount of hitting power that these heavy darts had. The hog ran about 25 yards and dropped. Ron was the first to reach the sow. As he approached, the hog had one last bit of energy and lunged at Ron. Automatically, he drew his atlatl back and with a swift throw, put the dart into the hogs neck. Within seconds the hog was dead.



LOU BECKER AND HIS KILL.

Sunday morning we were up again to have another go at the hogs. Ron was determined to add a third hog to our tally. Steve and I were determined to help him.

We began to walk the various trails looking for fresh signs. The large fields, where on Saturday we had good luck seemed devoid of any hogs. Steve stated that often wild pigs will vacate an area where they have been hunted and head for thicker cover in the woods. This seemed to be the case.

We started to work the thicker areas of the woods; however, it was next to impossible to walk quietly enough to avoid spooking the hogs. By 10:00 a.m. we began to work our way back to the more open areas of the preserve. As we walked one of the trails, we noticed a small group of sows and boars lying down in a brushy area. Steve told Ron to circle widely around the animals while he and I moved in the opposite direction in order to drive the hogs toward Ron.

As soon as Ron was in position, we began a slow deliberate drive. When Steve and I got closer, the hogs went directly toward Ron. When they came within about 18 yards, Ron took a throw at the largest hog. I could see the yellow fletching going directly toward the boars back. At the last split second, the boar wheeled just enough so that the dart missed by three inches.

By this time, the small group of hogs had high-tailed it toward the thick woods and we were unable to get another crack at them.

Time had gone by fast--way too fast, and we had to face the reality that it was time for us to pack up and head north for Michigan. What a weekend it had been! We had relived history, and taken two wild hogs with the ancient atlatl. We had enough memories to last a lifetime. Steve stated that he plans to make this atlatl boar hunt an annual event. I know that Ron and I will be back next year.

LIMERICK CONTEST ENTRIES:

As you remember, Last issue we asked members to complete the following limerick:

*There once was a man from
Seattle
Who carved out his own atlatl
But his aim was so bad
With the glasses he had*

Here are the responses we received so far:

From Wayne Brian:
That he shot Randolph Scott off
his saddle.
or
So forever his nose they would
straddle.

From Helen White:
That it was all an uphill
battle.

From Leni Club:
He screamed, "Please don't
anyone tattle!"
or
He'd do better with William
Tell's apple.
or
He fled and hid in his castle.
or
He should just give up the
battle.

From Hallie Cash:
He'd hit all his neighbor's
prize cattle.

From Bill Tate:

In hunting for deer, he got
cattle.

You have until the Annual Meeting, July 11th (See notice in the CAS Annual Encampment notice below) to submit your one liner, or to write your own whole limerick about atlatls. Winners will receive a free WAA T-shirt.

(Send submissions to: Bill Tate, 1390 S. Paris Court, Aurora, CO 80012, or bring them to the Annual Meeting)

EVENTS--EVENTS--EVENTS--EVENTS

THE ATLATL WORLD OPEN

From Fort Caspar Museum, Casper, Wyoming: This years World Open Atlatl Contest will be held June 20, and 21. The contest will run in conjunction with a Mountain Man Rendezvous and the Primitive Weapons Contest. There will be two courses for the Atlatl contest. Registration is scheduled to begin 10:00 a.m. Both contests will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 20th. Vendor space is available, but contact the museum prior to that weekend. Richard L. Young, Museum Director, 4001 Ft. Caspar Rd., Casper, WY 82604. Ph. (307) 235-8462

**SEVENTH ANNUAL
CAS ENCAMPMENT
July 10, 11,
and 12**

The Colorado Archaeological Society announces plans for its annual encampment and atlatl throw to be held at Horseshoe Campground 5 miles southwest of Fairplay, Colorado.

Past CAS President, and WAA member Keith Abernathy has organized this year's event.

The main atlatl contest requires that atlatls and darts be made from natural materials (rules available at the campground). All comers may participate, however, only a CAS member may win the "GREATEST HONOR" award. There will also be a "free-for-all" contest at which any equipment may be used.

Saturday evening meal will be a pot luck supper and Sunday Morning will be provided at a cost of \$3.50 adult and \$2.50 children under 10.

Saturday afternoon, July 11th, the World Atlatl Association's annual meeting will be held. Election of officers and other business will be attended to. All WAA members are urged to attend.

**4TH ANNUAL
MONTANA ATLATL
MAMMOTH HUNT**

DATE: August 8, 1992 11:00AM

PLACE: 3212 York (Lori) Road,
across highway from "Farm in
the Dell."

ENTRY FEE: \$10.00 adults,
\$5.00 Children under 16.
(Includes meal and soda pop)

PRIZES AND AWARDS: Beautiful trophies for first three places for men, women, and kids under 16. Large trophy for the "Mightiest Hunter."

TARGETS: 8 X 9 ft. and 6 X 6 ft. mammoths and balloons.

Course: Men, 3 throws at each: 90, 75, 60, and 45 meter distances.

Women and under 16: 3 throws at each: 45, 40, 30, and 20 meter targets.

EQUIPMENT: Open to any type of atlatl equipment.

There will be novelty shoots, exhibits, flint knapping and primitive fire making demonstrations. Instructors will be available.

SPONSORS: Manuel and Helen White, Bob Perkins, Dave and Dianne Schwab.

In addition to being issued "hunting" licenses, there is the possibility of receiving one of these citations:

CITATION

MONTANA ATLATL MAMMOTH HUNT

You are hereby cited for the following violation(s):

___ hunting without a license

___ fatally injuring a member of an endangered species

___ injuring or attempting to injure a member of an endangered species

This citation is issued by an official game warden.

signature of violator

A kangaroo court has been held and YOU ARE GUILTY!
No appeals allowed.

**VALLEY OF FIRE
ATLATL CONTEST
RESULTS**

Another fun contest near the "Fun City" of Las Vegas, NV is history. The contest was held April 11, 1992. Jim Hammon, Valley Of Fire State Park Ranger was host, with WAA Vice President coordinating.

Twenty-two participants attended from all over the western United State. The following states were represented: Utah, Colorado, California, Nevada, Oregon, Montana, and Arizona.

THE WINNERS WERE:

GRAND CHAMPION -- Troy Helmick

Men's Division

- 1st Troy Helmick, Townsend, Montana
- 2nd Ray Ferguson, Pima, AZ
- 3rd Tim Boucher, Dillon, CO

Women's Division

- 1st Heidi Daetwyler, Dillon, CO

- 2nd Leni Clubb, Ocotillo, CA
- 3rd Patti Thompson, Salt Lake City, UT

Sixteen and Under

- 1st Alura Clayton, Susanville, CA
- 2nd Brad Hoopes, Phelan, CA
- 3rd none

**WORLDS RECORD
DISTANCE THROW**

Although no actual contest for distance was held as was previously announced, one WAA member, Wayne Brian made a bid for establishing a new Worlds Record throw. On a course laid out and measured by WAA officers, Wayne eclipsed all previous distance throws by about two zip codes. After throwing a number of darts to just short of the 600 foot mark, Wayne finally made a cast of 616.8 feet (188 meters). An accomplishment which earned him the World Atlatl Association's first "Certificate of Achievement."

CONGRATULATIONS, WAYNE!



L TO R, TROY HELMICK, LENI CLUBB, HEIDI DAETWYLER, BRAD HOOPES, RAY FERGUSON, PATTI THOMPSON, TIM BOUCHER, AND ALURA CLAYTON.



WAYNE BRIAN--DISTANCE THROWER

BITS AND PIECES, THINGS AND STUFF

Letter to WAA, 23 Apr. 1992

Please find \$10.00 check for dues enclosed. Also I would like to say how much I enjoyed meeting fellow atlatlists and all others at Atlatl Rock. (Valley of Fire) Especially when Leni Clubb called my name for second place, which was a total surprise and tickled me to death. Whoever said: "I have hunted mammoth alone too long." finds me in complete sympathy. Few people here know what an atlatl is, but I am trying to pass the word. Tell me what else I can do.

Sincerely,
Ray Ferguson

ADVERTISEMENT

THE FOLLOWING FIRMS OFFER MEMBERS A 10% DISCOUNT ON ATLATLS AND RELATED MATERIALS:

BOWSPORT ARCHERY, 5940 URBAN DR. MARINE CITY, MI 48039, (313) 765-4717. LONG TIME ARROWSMITH, LOU BECKER, MAKES FINE DARTS AND ATLATLS.

BOB BEANE OF BOWWOODS FIVE, 1821 REDWING ST., SAN MARCOS, CA 92069, (619) 744-9797, MAKES REPLICA ATLATLS, INCLUDING THE SAND DUNE CAVE ATLATL SET.

WAYNE BRIAN OF PRIMITIVE POTTERY PROC. 824 W. KIVA, MESA, AZ 85210, (602) 491-8460 MAKES HIS RECORD SETTING LONG DISTANCE ATLATL SYSTEM. ALSO A POTTER, ONE OF HIS REPLICA POTS DISPLAYS ATLATL SCENES.

BILL TATE OF TATE ENTERPRISES, PO BOX 440003, AURORA, CO 80044-0003, (303) 755-5591 MAKES THE ORIGINAL "SPEARCHUCKER" ATLATL KIT AS WELL AS SELLS BOOKS ON ATLATLS AND PRIMITIVE SKILLS.

OTHER WAA MEMBERS WHO MAKE ATLATLS OR RELATED EQUIPMENT ARE ENCOURAGED TO PLACE SHORT ADVERTISEMENTS IN THIS NEWSLETTER ON A SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS AT NO COST. ALL WE ASK IS THAT YOU OFFER AT LEAST A 10% DISCOUNT TO OTHER WAA MEMBERS.

Members who are interested in boomerangs might like to know that Ben Rhue, authority on this fine primitive weapon and modern sporting device is a member of WAA. Not only is Ben the author of the book: "Boomerang," but he is a former world champion thrower.

A recent article by Rohan Sullivan in the Australian, 2/27/92 states:

"Mr. Benjamin Ruhe, who as founder of the US Boomerang throwing association has seen the activity grow to international proportions as a sporting event."

"Mr Ruhe, known as "Guru" Ruhe in boomerang throwing circles has spent more than 30 years researching and promoting the device as a marvel of ancient technology after having his curiosity sparked during a visit to Melbourne for the 1956 Olympics."

"Boomerang throwing is growing in stature as both a sporting event and as a scientific phenomenon in America and Europe. There are 42 boomerang clubs in France alone."

"(The boomerang) is the thinking man's frisbee. It is distinctly for a special breed of cat. There are a lot of aerospace engineers, computer wizards, physics professors and politicians involved."

NOTE: BEN RUHE CAN BE CONTACTED AT 1882 COLUMBIA RD. NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009, (202) 234-9208