

The ATLATL

APRIL 1993

"Too long have I hunted mammoth alone!"

Rich McWhorter

VOL. NO. 2

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

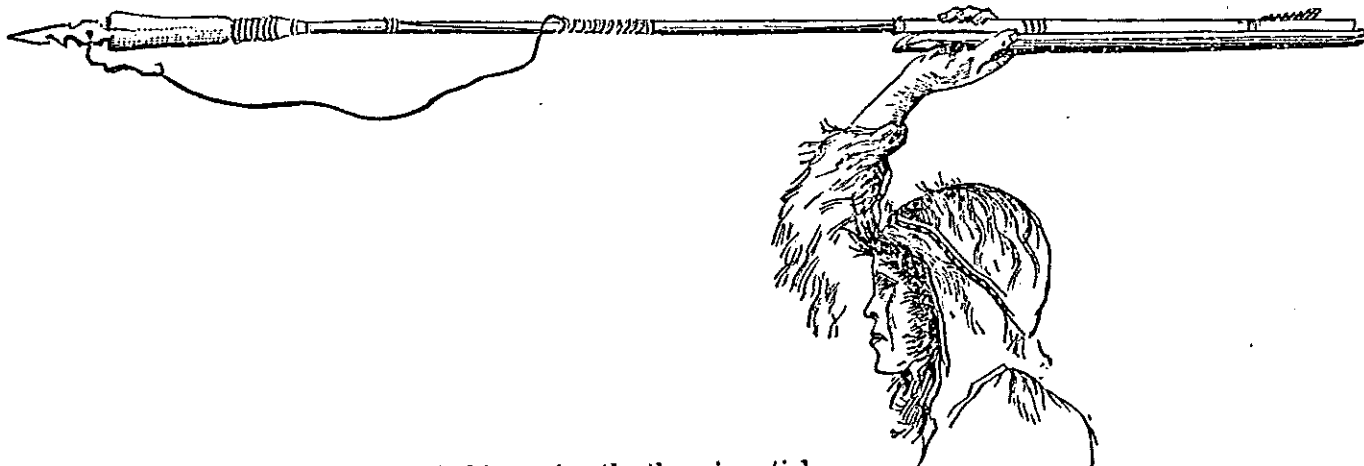


FIG. 1. Eskimo using the throwing-stick.

Archaeologist, Bob Muteau presented me with a copy of a report titled: "Throwing-Sticks In The National Museum." The material is from the "Report Of National Museum, 1884," and contains drawings of several throwing boards or Eskimo atlats from across the North American arctic. I will be including extracts from this report in the next several issues. The excellent drawings with brief descriptions illustrate the skill of ethnographic collectors of this time period. The report written by Otis T. Mason, begins:

Col. Lane Fox tells us there are three areas of the throwing-stick: Australia, where it is simply an elongated spindle with a hook at the end; the country of the Conibos and the Purus, on the Upper Amazon, where the implement resembles that of the Australians, and the hyperborean regions of North America.

It is of this last group that we shall now speak, since the National Museum possesses only two specimens from the first-named area and none whatever

from the second.

The researches and collections of Bessels, Turner, Boas, Hall, Mintzner, Kennicott, Ray, Murdoch, Nelson, Herendeen, and Dall, to all of whom I acknowledge my obligations, enable me to compare widely separated regions of the hyperborean area, and to distinguish these regions by the details in the structure of the throwing-stick.

The method of holding the throwing-stick is indicated in Fig. 1 by a drawing of H. W. Elliott. The Eskimo is just in the act of launching the light seal harpoon. The barbed point will fasten itself into the animal, detach itself from the ivory foreshaft, and unwind the rawhide or sinew line, which is securely tied to both ends of the light wooden shaft by a martingale device. The heavy ivory foreshaft will cause the shaft to assume an upright position in the water and the whole will act as a drag to impede the progress of the game. The same idea of impeding progress and of retrieving is carried out by a multitude of devices not necessary to mention here.

The Eskimo spend much time in their skin kyaks, from which it would be difficult to launch an arrow from a bow, or a harpoon from the unsteady, cold, and greasy hand. This device of the throwing-stick, therefore, is the substitute for the bow or the sling, to be used in the kayak, by a people who cannot procure the proper materials for a heavier lance-shaft, or at least whose environment is

prejudicial to the use of such a weapon. Just as soon as we pass Mount St. Elias going southward, the throwing-stick, plus the spear or dart of the Eskimo and the Aleut, gives place to the harpoon with a long, heavy, cedar shaft, weighing 15 or 20 pounds, whose momentum from both hands of the Indian without the throw-stick, exceeds that of the Eskimo and Aleut darts and harpoons, with the additional velocity imparted by the throwing-stick. It must not be forgotten, also that the kyak is a very frail, unsteady thing, and therefore not much of the momentum of the body can be utilized, as it is by the Northwest Indians in making a lunge with a heavy shaft. The throwing-stick is also said by some arctic voyagers to be useful in giving directness of aim. perhaps no other savage device comes so near in this respect to a gun barrel or the groove of a bow-gun. Its greatest advantages, however, are the firm grip which permits the hunter to apply the force of his arm to the propulsion of his weapon. having practiced with a throwing-stick somewhat, I have imagined also that there was a certain amount of leverage acquired by the particular method of holding the stick and straightening the arm, as a toggle joint. That implement, which seems so simple, and which is usually mentioned and dismissed in a word, possesses several marks or organs, which help to distinguish the locality in which each form occurs, as well as to define the associations of the implement as regards the weapon thrown from it and the game pursued. These marks are:

1. Shape, or general outline in face and side view, and size.
2. Handle, the part grasped in the hand.
3. Thumb-groove or thumb-lock, provision for the firm and comfortable insertion of the phalanx and ball of the thumb.
4. Finger-grooves, provision for each finger according to its use in the manipulation of the implement.
5. Finger-pegs, little plugs of wood or ivory to give more certain grip for the fingers and to prevent their slipping. The devices for the fingers are the more necessary where the hands are cold and everything is covered with grease.
6. Finger-tip cavities, excavations on the front face of the implement into which the tips of the three last fingers descend to assist in grasping and to afford a rest on the back of these fingers for the weapon shaft.
7. Index-finger cavity or hole, provision for the insertion of the index finger, which plays a very important part in the use of the throwing-stick.
8. Spear shaft groove, in which the shaft of the weapon lies, as an arrow or bolt in the groove

of a bow-gun.

9. Hook or spur, provision for seizing the butt end of the weapon while it is being launched. These may be ridges left in the wood by excavation, or pieces of wood, bone, ivory, etc., inserted. The size and shape of this part, and the manner of insertion, are also worthy of notice.

10. Edges: This feature is allied to the form and not to the function of the implement.

11. Faces: Upper, on which the weapon rests; Lower, into which the index finger is inserted.

The figures illustrating this article are drawn to a scale indicated by inch marks in the margin, every dot on the line standing for an inch.

By the presence of absence, by the number or the shape of some of these marks or structural characteristics, the type and locality can be easily detected. The Eskimo have everywhere bows and arrows for land hunting, the former made of several pieces of bone lashed together, or of a piece of driftwood lashed and re-enforced with sinew. The arrows are of endless variety.

It should also be noticed that the kind of game and the season of the year, the shape and size of the spear accompanying the stick, and the bare or gloved hand, are all indicated by language expressed in various parts of this wonderful throwing-stick.

GREENLAND TYPE

The greenland throwing-stick is a long, flat trapezoid, slightly ridged along the back (Fig. 2). It has no distinct handle at the wide end, although it will be readily seen that the expanding of this part secures a firm grip. A chamfered groove on one side for the thumb, and a smaller groove on the other side for the index finger, insure the implement against slipping from the hunter's grasp. Marks 5, 6, 7 of the series on page 280 (No. 1 through 11, above) are wanting in the Greenland type. The shaft-groove, in which lies the shaft of the great harpoon, is wide, deep and rounded at the bottom. There is no hook, as in all the other types, to fit the end of the harpoon shaft, but in its stead are two holes, one in the front end of the shaft-groove, between the thumb-groove and the finger-groove, with an ivory eyelet or grommet for a lining, the other at the distal end of the shaft-groove, in the ivory piece which is ingeniously inserted there to form that extremity. This last mentioned hole is not cylindrical like the one in front, but is so constructed as to allow the shaft-peg to slide off easily. These holes exactly fit two ivory pegs projecting from the harpoon shaft. When the hunter

has taken his throwing-stick in his hand he lays his harpoon shaft upon it so that the pegs will fall in to the little holes of the stick. By a sudden jerk of his hand the harpoon is thrown forward and released, the pegs drawing out of the holes in the stick. At the front end of the throwing-stick a narrow piece of ivory is pegged to prevent splitting. As before intimated, this type of throwing-stick is radically different from all others in its adjustment to the pegs on the heavy harpoon. In all other examples in the world the hook or spur is on the stick and not on the weapon.

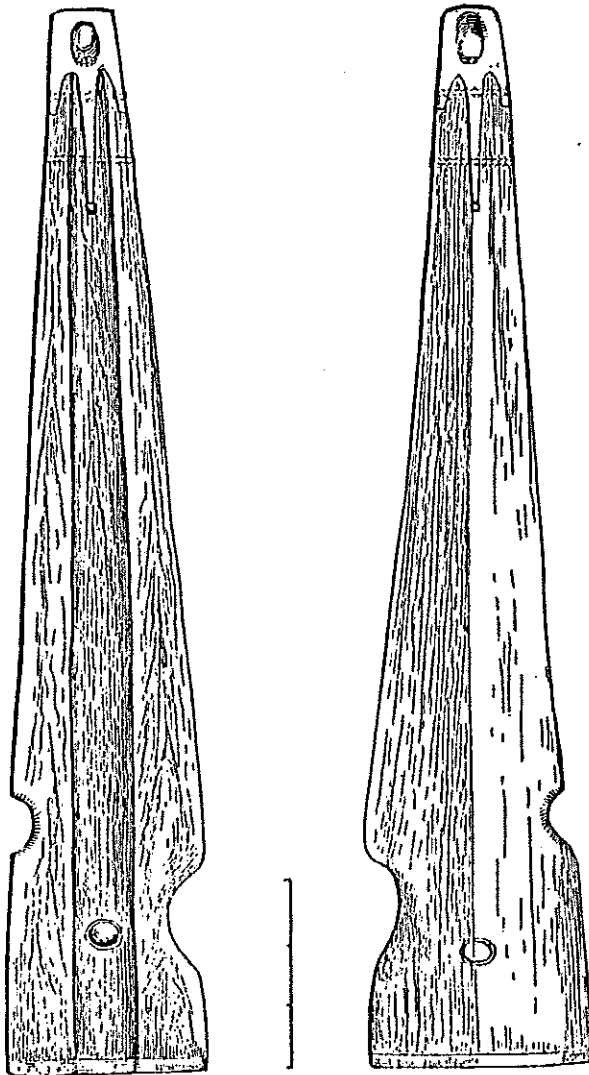


Fig. 2. Greenland throwing-stick, back and front.

Fig. 2. Greenland type of throwing-stick. The specific characteristics are the broad form; the

scanty grooves for thumb and fingers; the absence of pegs, separate finger grooves, or index perforation; but the most noteworthy are the two grommets or eyelets to fit ivory pegs on the harpoon-shaft. The peculiar method of strengthening the ends with ivory pieces should also be noted. From Holsteinburg, Greenland, 1884. Catalogue number, 74126.

UNGAVA TYPE

One specimen from Fort Chimo in this region, southeast of Hudson Bay, kindly lent by Mr. Lucien Turner, is very interesting, having little relation with that from Greenland (which is so near geographically), and connecting itself with all the other types as far as Kadiak, in Alaska (Fig. 3). The outline of the implement is quite elaborate and symmetrical, resembling at the hook end a fiddle-head, and widening continuously by lateral and facial curves to the front, where it is thin and flat. A slight rounded notch for the thumb, and a longer chamfer for three fingers, form the handle. Marks 5 and 6 are wanting. The cavity for the index finger extends quite through the implement, as it does in all cases where it is on the side of the harpoon-shaft groove, and not directly under it. The shaft groove is shallow, and the hook at the lower extremity is formed by a piece of ivory inserted in a parallel groove in the fiddle-head and fastened with pegs. It is as though a saw-cut one-eighth inch wide had been made longitudinally through the fiddle-head one-half inch beyond, and the space had been filled with a plate of ivory pared down flush with the wood all round, excepting at the projection left to form the hook or spur for the harpoon shaft. This peg or spur fits in a small hole in the butt of the harpoon or spear shaft and serves to keep the weapon in its place until it is launched from the hand. The Ungava spear is heavier than that of the western Eskimo, hence the stick and its spur are proportionately larger. It is well to observe carefully, the purport of the spur. A javelin, assegai, or other weapon hurled from the hand is seized in the center of gravity. The Greenland spears have the pegs for the throwing stick sometimes at the center of gravity, sometimes at the butt end. In all other uses of the throwing-stick the point of support is behind the center of gravity, and if the weapon is not fastened in its groove in (sic.) cannot be hurled. This fastening is accomplished by the backward leaning of the peg in the Greenland example, and by the spur on the distal end of the throwing-stick in all other cases.

YES, THERE STILL IS AN EASTERN SEABOARD ATLATL CHAMPIONSHIP

We hear from Gary Fogelman, Editor of "Indian Artifact Magazine" that this years tournament will be held near Binghamton, New York, the weekend of July 31--August 1. This two day event includes practice, demonstrations, flintknapping and the contest. Persons wishing to receive a brochure on the event should contact:

ESAC
c/o Gary L. Fogelman
Rd 1, Box 240
Turbotville, PA 17772

Bill Jacobsen of Rt. 2, Box 47, Edwards, MO 65326 (Ph. (417) 998-6384) called me to inform me of the first atlatl competition for their state. This May 1st and 2nd event at Pomme de Terre State Park near Hermitage, Missouri is being held in conjunction with their annual Rendezvous Days. It is a shame that it is occurring just at the time this newsletter is going to bed, so that we can neither spread the word in advance, nor print the winners. Hopefully Bill will report on the event in the next issue set for publication in late July.

.....From Scott Leslie
Members may want to run out to secure their copy of *TRADITIONAL BOWHUNTER* magazine. A now expanded Lou Becker article: "Hunting With The Atlatl" was printed in their April-May issue. It should still be on the news stands. This article was first

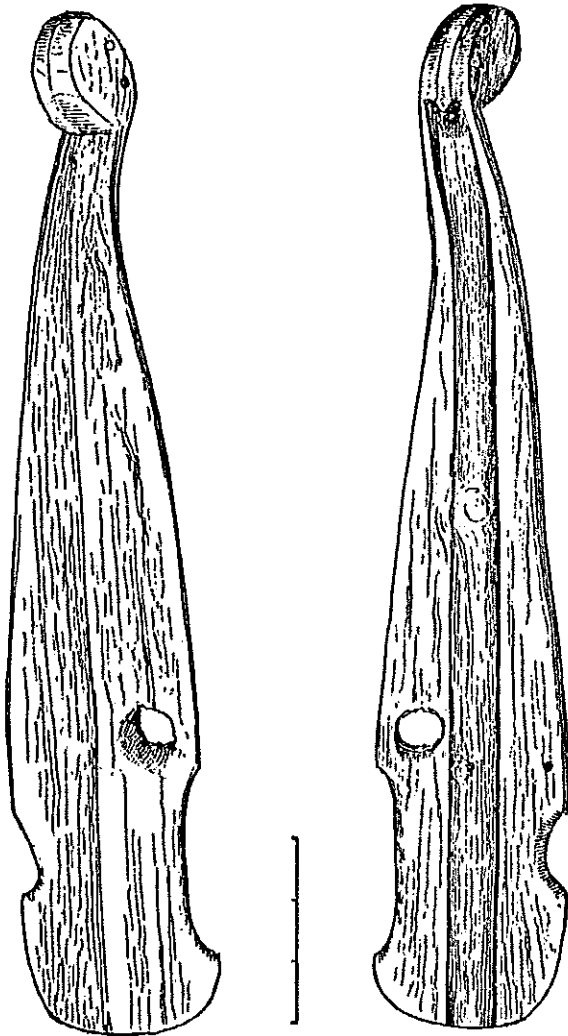


Fig. 3. Ungava throwing-stick, front and back.

Fig. 3. Ungava Type of throwing-stick. The specific marks are the general outline, especially the fiddle-head ornament at the bottom; the bend upward at the lower extremity, the eccentric perforation for the index finger, and the groove for three fingers. Collected at Ungava, by Lucien M. Turner, 1884. Museum number, 76700.

(Editor's note: This seemingly uncommon fiddle shape seems to show up elsewhere in the world. In the Spring issue 1989 we reported on an atlatl from Key Marco, Florida, and again in the Spring of 1991, Arthur Lee reported on another Key Marco atlatl with a similar construction. The first had the fiddle shape at the handle, and the second at the hook end as in the Canadian thrower above.)

More will be reported from this document in later issues.

published on these pages in May of 1992, and concerns the first annual wild boar hunt near Vidalia, GA. (FOR MORE ON BOAR HUNTING, SEE BELOW, Ed. note.)

ATLATL BOAR HUNT 1993 by Lou Becker

The atlatl Boar Hunt for March 13 and 14, 1993 got off to a slow start because of a major storm throughout the southland. When we arrived in Vidalia, Friday, March 12th the temperature was falling and by Saturday morning, the temperature was 20 degrees. The wind was gusting to 75 miles an hour making it a little stiff for throwing darts at wild hogs. By Sunday, the weather had settled down somewhat, and as the sun came out the temperature got into the 30s, the wind subsided to only 20 to 30 mile an hour gusts.



L TO R. LOU BECKER, NORM BLAKER, RON HARMON, STEVE COLEMAN, SCOTT NICKOLS, LARRY CLARK.

This year we had six atlatlers. The Michigan hunters were Norm Blaker, Lou Becker, Ron Harmon and Scott Nickols. From Georgia were Land owner, Steve Coleman and

Larry Clark. We started hunting about 8:00 am and everyone had plenty of action. By days end we had "harvested" one 200 lb. hog and everyone had had a chance to use their atlatls and darts.



STEVE AND THE HOG.

Late Sunday afternoon, we held a novelty/fun tournament. Each thrower could choose a certain distance and take a throw at an animal target. The rest of the contestants would try to duplicate that throw. Some of those attempted were: running throw, over the head throw, side throw, clout throw from 70 yards (an archers term), and distance throw. In addition, accuracy casts were made from 15, 20, 25, 45, 50, 60, 70, and 80 yard distances. At the end of the contest the prizes were divided up among the contestants.



RON WINDING UP TO THROW.

In retrospect, this years Atlatl Boar Hunt, although cut by one day because of the "Storm of the Century" turned out to be a most worthwhile event. I am sure it will continue to grow from year to year.



STEVE AND NORM
REVIEWING THE HUNT.

NEW ATLATL GROUP FORMED

We recently received the following letter from Patrick McShane, Superintendent PCS Research Reserve, Celebration Park Site Historian, PO Box 61, Victory Lane, Melba ID 83641:

Greetings, I recently came across information about your organization and made a call to Leni Clubb. She was gracious enough to forward a great deal of information on your organization related materials.

It is interesting to note that I recently founded the "IDAHO ATLATL ASSOCIATION", and on the last weekend of National Archaeology Week, we will be holding our first competition here at Celebration Park...located on the Snake River near Melba, Idaho. This site is an ancient wintering location that was used by the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone for more than 9500 years. Located on this site is

the largest collection of Petroglyphs in the state.

When some of my students and I started recording the Petroglyphs and created a computer program to study them, we came across an atlatl element. This made us study and do some "experimental" archaeology, making several atlats and darts. As we sharpened our throwing skills a great many people visiting the area (500 plus per weekend) watched, became interested, tried their skill at throwing and out of a great demand for a competition, we formed a proper organization and have more than five hundred people wanting to participate in our first competition. We devised our own range (not unlike what Leni described to me) and have established our rules and regulations (again quite similar to yours). I spent more than three months trying to make a dart that was beginner proof, and would not be easily destroyed. I finally talked with the people at Easton Arrow Company in Salt Lake City and have now perfected a 54 inch, 80 gram aluminum dart with a standard field tip. They fly true, smooth and far in all sizes of atlats. Our atlats are Class III (Emory Strong Stone age in the Great Basin), and use stone weights that are custom fitted for the atlatl user.

I would like to register myself in the WAA in the name of the Idaho Atlatl Association. I am sure that when I put the WAA patch on my throwing shirt a great many more will want to apply for membership...after all, we are all pointed in the same direction. Right?

Sincerely, Patrick McShane



L TO R. TROY HELMICK, VICKIE HILL, BRAD HOOPES, RAY FERGUSON, GWEN LESLIE,
LENI CLUBB, MATTHEW BULICZ, LYNN HATZENBUEHLER, TIM BOUCHER

VALLEY OF FIRE ATLATL COMPETITION

By Leni Clubb

It was a picture perfect day! Atlatl Rock loomed magnificently over the well laid out competition course. The sky was very blue--only a light wind was blowing as twenty-three atlatlers ranging from ages 7 to 78 lined up to start the Third Annual Atlatl Contest at the Valley of Fire State Park. As someone said, "It doesn't get any better than this!"

Contestants came from many states. California, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, Missouri, Montana, even a young couple from Germany (who just happened to be in the park that day) participated. Spectators lined the road along the course watching, and questioning the participants about their equipment. Many pictures were taken of the atlatls and darts as well as long shots of the groups of throwers out on the course.

Excitement and enthusiasm mounted as the various groups who had completed the course came up to throw the accuracy round. There was much applause when a dart hit the target with a satisfying "plop", and sympathetic groans when one missed the bales and target altogether.

AND THE WINNERS WERE:

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Under 16 | - | 1st Matthew Bulicz, Henderson, NV
2nd Brad Hoopes, Phelan, CA
3rd Gwen Leslie, Carbondale, CO |
| Women | - | 1st Vickie Hill, Hemet, CA
2nd Lynn Hatzenbuehler, Las Vegas, NV
3rd Leni Clubb, Ocotillo, CA |
| Men | - | 1st Troy Helmick, Helena, MT
2nd Ray Ferguson, Pima, AZ
3rd Tim Boucher, Dillon, CO |
- The Grand Champion Award went to Troy Helmick.

...IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

Fremont Indian State Park-World Atlatl Association contest. June 4, 5, and 6th at Fremont Indian State Park just west of Richfield, UT on I-70. Registration will begin Friday, June 4th at the Visitor Center. The contest itself will begin at 10:00 am June 5th. Contact WAA representative, Leni Clubb, at (619) 358-7835, or Fremont Indian State Park Ranger, Pete Weimer (801) 527-4631 for additional details. Or write Fremont Indian State Park 11550 West Clear Creek Canyon Road, Sevier, Utah 84766.

In addition to the atl atl contest and demonstration, primitive technology workshops on flint knapping, food gathering, and tool making (including atl atl construction) will be conducted throughout the weekend, from Thursday on.

Utah is a beautiful state to visit, so...COME ON DOWN!!!!

MEMBERS WISHING A COPY OF THE ATLATL "RESOURCE LIST" SHOULD CONTACT CHARLEY LILLY AT: 8800 State Hwy 133, Carbondale, CO 81623. This listing contains contacts for learning more about atl atls and related topics. Addresses of firms manufacturing atl atl materials and people making special studies of atl atls. Please include \$1.00 for photocopying and postage.

It is now possible for a flight attendant to get the pilot pregnant. Richard Ferris, Pres. United Airlines

My Grandmother is over 80 and still doesn't need glasses--- Drinks right out of the bottle.

Bits and Pieces Things and Stuff

Greetings from Arizona and the "Valley of the Sun," part of the Great Mojave Desert, the most fruitful of all the worlds deserts, and I am glad to be here.

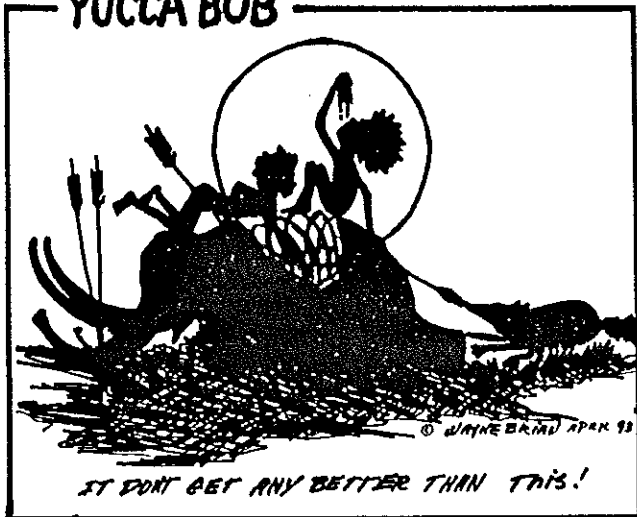
March has been a busy month for me. It is Archaeology Month in Arizona, and too many programs to attend. I take in all I can, but then there is the Senior Olympics on the State level, and the Golden Olympics in Sierra Vista, AZ. I entered the Billiards and Javelin contests at age group 60-64, won the gold medal at both events in Billiards and because Manual White might be listening, I wont talk about the Javelin throw, other than to say Manual, I was introduced to the Javelin by Charles & Renee Rolof who met you in the Nationals.

The big thrill was to have the opening ceremony at the Golden Olympics presentation all to myself. I demonstrated the atl atl, progressing through the evolution of the spear by throwing a very crooked staff first, then the javelin, followed by a primitive atl atl, progressing through a series of evolving long distance units to the final unit with which I set the worlds record. That last throw was near 600 feet--no record, but there are a lot more people that now know what an atl atl is, and about two more who now pronounce it correctly out of that 500 or so who were there. I was very pleased to get us some additional exposure, and who knows what it will do for us. Every little bit helps

Last evening during a camp fire dinner at the Pueblo Grande Museum, I talked at length with Roger Lidman, the Museum Director about the atlatl demonstration which was to be held on April 24th, as mentioned in the last newsletter. We also touched on the subject of a contest on the museum grounds with them as co-sponsors. It sounds good. They are very receptive. The time frame is maybe sometime in March to tie in with Arizona's Archaeology month. The WAA Board of Directors will do further networking with Roger Lidman and the Museum in the near future on this subject. They have a lot of room, and Arizona is beautiful in early March. *Wilderness is the classroom. Ancient voices are the teachers. Knowing self and balance are the guests. (From Teaching Drum Outdoor School)*

In Balance, Wayne Brian

YUCCA BOB



From birth to age 18, a girl needs good parents, from 18 to 35 she needs good looks, from 35 to 55 she needs a good personality, and from 55 on she needs cash.
Sophie Tucker, 1884-1966

THE COLORADO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ENCAMPMENT IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 3, 4 AND 5, 1993 AT A PRIMITIVE CAMPING LOCATION NORTHEAST OF CRAIG, COLORADO CALLED "LOST PARK." MY INFORMATION IS THAT THE UNPAVED NUMBER "27" ROAD BRANCHES TO THE EAST FROM STATE HIGHWAY 13 ABOUT 10 MILES NORTH OF CRAIG. TAKE 27 ROAD WHICH ACCORDING TO MY MAP, BECOMES "FR ROAD 110" ABOUT 10 MILES FURTHER TO LOST PARK.

The World Atlatl Association will hold its annual business meeting at this event so members might want to plan on a Colorado vacation this year. The meeting is scheduled for early Saturday, the 3rd of July so as not to interfere with Encampment activities.

WAA Secretary Charley Lilly reports that there are now 164 members.

Atlatl World Open

The Atlatl World Open will be June 12-13, at Fort Caspar, Casper, Wyoming. This, the oldest of the annual atlatl contests and demonstrations will be held in conjunction with a "mountain man" Rendezvous. Contact Fort Caspar Ranger Rick Young at 4001 Ft. Caspar Rd., Casper, WY 82604, phone (307) 235-8462.

Complete this sentence:

- I never met a man I didn't like*
- A. to cheat.
 - b. at first.
 - c. to avoid.
 - d. better than you.

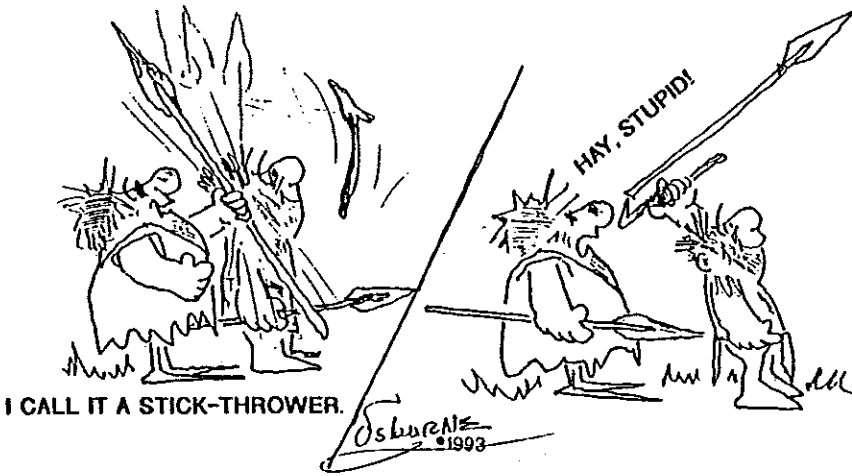
ADVERTISEMENT

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

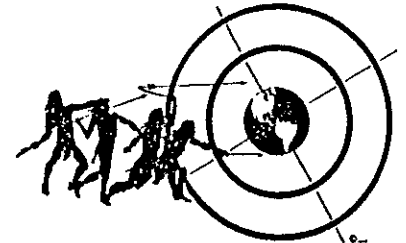
BOB BRANE, OF BOWWOODS FIVE, 1821 REDWING ST., SAN MARCOS, CA 92069, (619) 744-9797, MAKES REPLICA ATLATLS, INCLUDING THE SAND DUNE CAVE ATLATL SET.

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.

BEN RUHE, 1882 COLUMBIA ROAD N.W., WASHINGTON, D C 20009, (202) 234-9208, HAS ACCESS TO SOME PITJANTJATJARA WOONERAS (ATLATLS) PREVIOUSLY COLLECTED BY AN AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGIST.



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THE OBJECTIVES ARE:

* TO ENCOURAGE THE USE, PRACTICE, COMPETITION, PROMOTION, MANUFACTURE, AND PERPETUATION OF THE ATLATL SPEAR THROWER AS AN ANCIENT HUNTING WEAPON, AND AS A MODERN SPORTING DEVICE.

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* TO BRING TOGETHER PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE ATLATL.

* TO COOPERATE WITH ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND ARCHAEOLOGISTS TO DISCOVER, RECORD, AND PRESERVE MATERIAL AND INFORMATION THAT ESTABLISHES OR ILLUSTRATES THE PRESENCE OF THE ATLATL.

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES THE WORLD ATLATL ASSOCIATION'S PERIODIC NEWSLETTER, THE ATLATL. THE NEWSLETTER WILL KEEP MEMBERS INFORMED OF ATLATL CONTESTS AND RESULTS, ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS, AND NEW STUDIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD. WE HOPE TO BRING YOU ARTICLES OF GENERAL INTEREST, AND PROVIDE A MARKETPLACE FOR ATLATLS AND RELATED EQUIPMENT.

* TO PROVIDE FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND PRESERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL MATERIALS AND INFORMATION RELATING TO THE ATLATL, AND FOR MAKING SUCH INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR STUDY.

MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO FORWARD ARTICLES, REPORTS, EVENTS OF INTEREST, CARTOONS, CLIPPINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS RELATING TO THE ATLATL FOR INCLUSION IN FUTURE ISSUES OF THE ATLATL.

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