



Finding the Michigan Longbow Association

By, Thom Jorgensen

Like many readers, I'm just back from the spring shoot and it was a lot of fun! It was great to see familiar faces, and to meet new folks alike. Today I'm thinking specifically about one of each. One gentleman who moved from out of state and joined the MLA a year ago was a familiar face after sharing deer camp last fall. The other man would be the new acquaintance made out on the 3D course, he also recently moved to Michigan. I was raised in Montana but my work has been based out of Michigan for the last 15 years. I changed jobs in 2010 and began living and working full time in the state; that is really when I finally considered myself a Michigander. So here we are; three guys who didn't grow up here in Michigan, who somehow found the MLA. Hearing how they stumbled into the MLA gave me pause to reflect on the people that introduced me to the organization, and what events brought me to join.

My first brush with the MLA was in South Carolina one year ago. Well more exactly in the back of a minivan heading to South Carolina to do a pig hunt. Driving through the dark of night in Kentucky the driver saw me awake and said "hey, the new *STICKTALK* came in today; it's in the back if you want something to read." I mentally ran through the Meijer magazine rack and couldn't picture a *STICKTALK* anywhere in there. That of course created the question that began this whole journey: "What's *STICKTALK*?"

I thumbed through the magazine and it seemed like good stuff, but I really didn't get a complete picture of what the MLA is and what it does. Turns out all three of the guys in the van were members of the MLA, so over the long weekend of pig hunting I was able to get to know them and their hunting ethic. I was greatly impressed with their quality of character. Knowing three good people who were members, and who spoke so enthusiastically about this organization is really what put the MLA on my radar.

After the hunt I bookmarked the MLA forum on tradgang.com. Without knowing any local members it was my only way to connect to the organization and keep in the loop of upcoming events. It wasn't so busy it was hard to keep up with the new posts, and it was a nice way to get to know some members from different parts of the state that I wouldn't be likely to bump into at the range on a weeknight. I started keeping a lookout for upcoming events.

The next big event that came up was the Great Lakes Longbow Invitational, so I did a day trip to see what it was all about. Much to my surprise I actually recognized not only people from the hunt, but several other folks from different ranges I had been shooting at over the previous year. I had a great time getting eaten by mosquitoes, breaking arrows on the 3D courses, and just talking about bows and shooting with everyone. Looking back I'm not surprised that the very first day I spent at a MLA function was the day I decided to join.

Just because I decided to join that day doesn't mean I did, and actually I didn't. I came up with a bunch of excuses not to go walk up to a bunch of strangers doing the sign ups that day and introduce myself. I needed a little nudge to go introduce myself, fill out the application, and open my wallet. That nudge came several weeks later when the October deer camp was announced. I



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signed up, booked my campsite, and got an electronic copy of *STICKTALK* all in the same day.

The reason I'm writing this as my first *STICKTALK* submission is because I think it provides an interesting perspective on the process it took an avid longbow archer and hunter living in Michigan to find and join this organization. My first brush was reading, *STICKTALK* I'm very thankful that the MLA prints these off and puts them in our mailboxes! Second impression was from those three members and their hunting ethics, a great reminder that we all represent the MLA in the eyes of people who are not members. Third contact point was the internet. I might not have known what weekend the GLLI was or what park it was in if it weren't for the information published out there.

Fourth, and most important thing that got a guy off the street to join was attending an event. For me it could have been the deer camp, the spring shoot, or the GLLI, but one great member event was all it took to make the decision. The last thing needed was a gentle nudge to fill out an application, for me that motivation came in the opportunity to participate in "member only" events. I wonder how many good folks there are out there that haven't had their first brush, or their final nudge yet?

Last month a few spots came open for a pig hunt in South Carolina so I grabbed one and started planning out how to pack my car. The last open bunk went to a young man from Grand Rapids who needed a ride; I of course offered him a ride and worked out the logistics. Of course the latest issue of *STICKTALK* was the last thing I packed before going to pick him up, maybe it can be a good first brush for someone

