

The Parting Shot

Thom Jorgensen



This time I'd like to talk a bit about our new website and the changing of the guard for the MLA webmaster duties. If you don't use the website, I have to apologize for using up the last pages of your *STICKTALK*. I'll owe you an extra good story next time. If you're on the internet, you should read on! Paul Wilburn has done an excellent job serving as the Michigan Longbow Association's webmaster for quite some time. There is a great deal of information that has been published, and it has been very easy for our users to navigate with their keyboard and a mouse.

As the years have gone by the code used to create and maintain websites has changed significantly. Our website was originally built on a 2003 era system that was abandoned by its creator some years ago. In the last year we've had some difficulties with the company that hosts our website saying they wouldn't be able to keep supporting it. Paul and I spoke on several occasions about some of these challenges, and we agreed that we would not be able to tweak the existing code enough to bring it up to date. A complete rebuild of our entire website would be required. Obviously that would have to wait until after hunting season! I know how to write the code, but I have none of Paul's artistic skill. Paul has a great perspective on the user interface and aesthetics, but not the raw coding skills. We decided that I would create a new website from the ground up to completely replace our existing one, and Paul offered his eyes for testing, reviewing, and provided great feedback all along the way.

We defined a few goals for this project:

- Embrace offsite interactive forums and social media
- Give extra attention to making Events detailed and easy to use
- Game Award photos ported 100% from the old site
- Provide the same look and feel for computers and phones
- 100% use of compliant and portable code

Since internet forums and social media have become the primary way for our internet connected members to communicate with each other, we want to make it easy for people to find their way to our official sites. The bottom of each page will have a link to our forum on TradGang.com (MLA moderated) and to our Facebook.com page (also administered by MLA members.) This provides a quick and easy way for questions, announcements, and pictures to be posted/shared/and responded too. The primary goal of the Event pages is to give a phone friendly page that can be used by members in route to events. Addresses, imbedded Google Map, and phone numbers in a click-to-call format are all elements that will hopefully make our site more useful to people on the go.

One thing that everyone I've talked to agrees about is that the Game Awards is one of their favorite parts of our website! All photos have been moved to the new site and more of a gallery navigation has been put into place to view them. Going forward Paul will continue to accept the applications and be point for the awards themselves. I will just publish the new ones to the site once they are official.

We have many members who use their mobile phones for all kinds of day to day activities. The new site has been tested with: iPhones, android phones, iPads, Windows PCs with different browsers and screen resolutions with 100% success. By sticking with standards based code and a format optimized for both older computers and smaller form factor mobile devices, we should have a friendly site for anyone to navigate. Compliant HTML and CSS was used for all pages and it will ensure that we won't have any issues with our hosting provider! Also this code is completely portable so we could decide at any point to move it to a different server or provider of our choice.

We hope that these changes make our site a more useful tool for our membership and to potential new members who are guests to our website and our events. So now that you've finished this issue of *STICKTALK*, head on over and take a look around! All new stuff, same old address: www.michiganlongbow.org

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