

The Parting Shot

Thom Jorgensen

Like many folks who live inside of a "City Limits" sign, I'm not allowed to shoot my longbow outside. Because of this I found a nice indoor range a few years ago and I spend most nights during the week there shooting. For most of the year the place would be completely empty if it were not for a couple of us longbow guys that hang out there. It's like the indoor archery version of Cheers if you remember that old TV show, and I'm either Norm or Cliff (and I reluctantly expect it's Cliff.)

That comfortable "home away from home" feeling completely changes this time of year. The pro shop sells compound bows and crossbows in addition to traditional bows, and because of this there is an unimaginable rush of people buying all sorts of contraptions just ahead of season opener. For a few weeks I get to stand shoulder to shoulder with other people who hunt the archery season and consider our similarities and differences in mentality and approach to this pursuit. You never know what you are going to hear or see, and often both surprise you.

Business had just started ramping up at the shop and one of the earliest shoppers this year was a young man setting up a new crossbow. Normally I don't pay much attention to the guys working on that kind of gear, so another longbow guy and I just continued our conversation about our upcoming season and where we would be hunting this fall. We are both going to be hunting new states so we talked a bit about logistics and licenses, weather patterns and schedules. Our conversation turned towards gear and by coincidence we had both just ordered the exact same model of safety harness to replace our old ones. We went on about different options we'd considered; lineman belts, relief straps, prusik ropes, etc. We also discussed a few "what if" scenarios about treestand safety for a while longer. This is when our young crossbow shooter offered up his only words of the evening: "Get good gear and use it every time. You don't want to end up like me; this will be my first hunt since I fell and broke my back two years ago." The young man was in his twenties, in a wheelchair, and had to have his hunting buddy cock and load his crossbow for him. He shot a few more rounds and then they packed up and left a little while later.

That was a very short discussion, but that ex-

change has been sticking with me. I know that some hunt will be my last, and I hope it's a very long way off! I've got a very full bucket list of places I want to go and animals I want to pursue, but I realized that I

couldn't do most of that list if I was confined to a wheelchair. I've made a personal pledge to be safe so I can enjoy as many future seasons as I can. I have some good friends who've fallen out of trees while bowhunting. Some of them have doubled down on the safety gear afterwards, and others refuse to go back up into a tree. I'm a firm believer that everyone must find their own path, but I thought it would be the perfect time of year to make a plea to our membership to take great care and be safe while enjoying the outdoors this fall. If you need a new harness, please get one. Tradgang had a harness giveaway this summer for anyone who planned to hunt from a treestand that didn't have one. If you need one you can look for that, or feel free to post a request on the MLA Facebook page. If you have straps you need to replace on your ladders or sticks it's a great time to do that too. Review the "proper use" videos that come with the gear or watch them online at the manufacturer's website or Youtube.

I'm taking the young man's words to heart: "Get good gear, use it every time." I wish everyone who hunts this year has great success in their pursuits. When you have one on the game pole, please snap a picture and fill out the Award Application found on the website.



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