

The ATLATL

“Too long have I hunted mammoth alone!”

Rich McWhorter

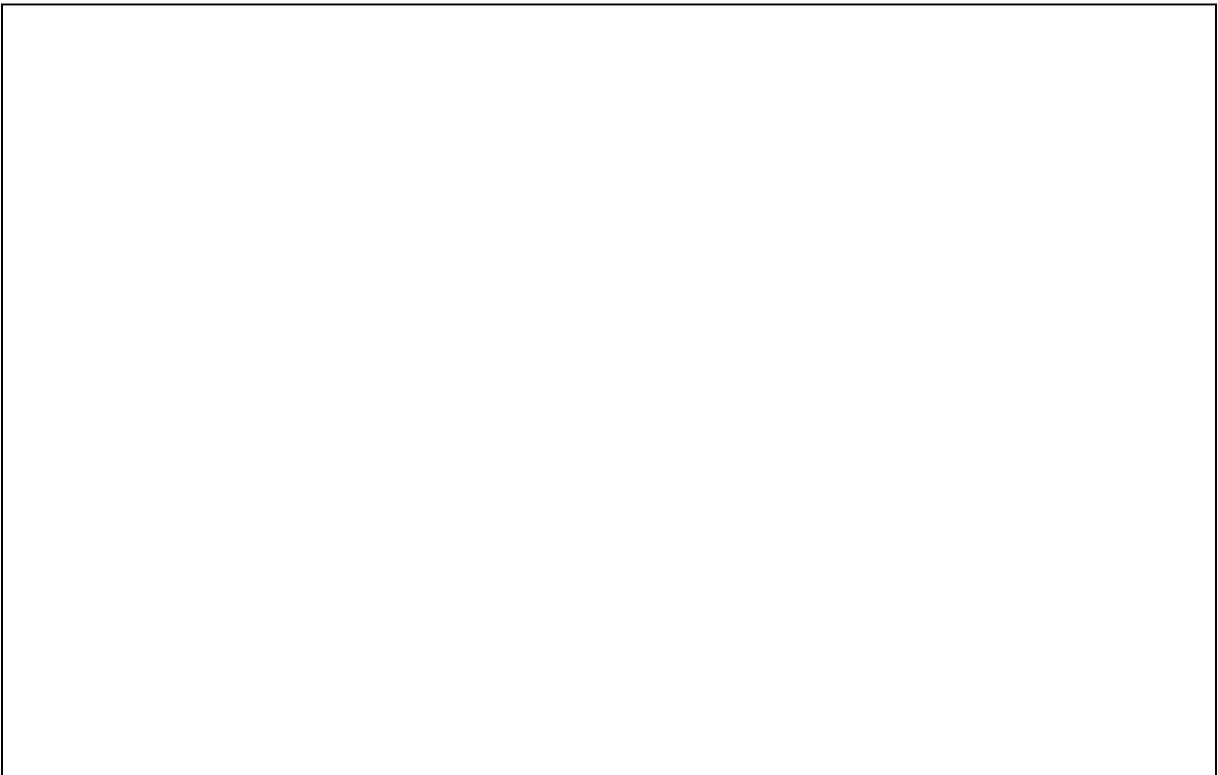
Volume 20, Number 3

The Newsletter of the World Atlatl Association, Inc
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October 2007

20th Anniversary

World Atlatl Association
Annual Meeting, Letchworth, NY



WAA 20th Anniversary

By Bill Tate

Everybody probably already knows that interest in forming The World Atlatl Association, Inc. came out of the Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS), and that that interest came from a science teacher by the name of Rod Laird in Saratoga, Wyoming. Rod, somewhere along the line had learned what an atlatl is, and generally how it worked. In trying to hold interest in his Junior High students, Rod had them construct their own atlatls and darts, and held what he called the World Atlatl Open. Along about his second or third year of doing this, the nation's archaeological community heard about it, and scientists began showing up to try their skills and to learn. It became a city-wide event with camping, a community breakfast thanks to the local Lyons Club, and it was topped off with evening talks by noted archaeologists.

After only a few years, general interest in the event, the World Atlatl Open began declining. It didn't actually die, but even though Saratoga is a beautiful place, it is small, and difficult to get to. Some members of The Colorado Archaeological Society gave consideration to "stealing" the contest and holding it where there were more people to benefit from it. Members within many of the chapters in our thousand-member strong organization had already adopted atlatls with the idea of holding public demonstrations and competitions, but in the end, steadier heads prevailed and instead of stealing an event, we organized The World Atlatl Association. We filled a void which spread the word atlatls to the nation and with help from primitive technologists active at the same time in Europe, many of whom became members of our organization, atlatl became practically a house-hold word.

Education of the public was one of our chief aims in the formation of WAA. I feel proud to be able to say to myself, "I was a part of that." I get a kick out of watching a family in a car stopped behind me at a light, obviously discussing my ATLATL license plate and the 8-year old uses a throwing motion and everyone's head nods in the affirmative, showing comprehension.

Postscript: I must give Leni Clubb credit for practically forcing me to make my first throw with an atlatl. She's like that, you know. Leni held home workshops to build atlatls, and set up a target course around her rural home north of Denver where many members congregated on weekends. Charlie Lilly, now deceased, pressed us to organize, and personally performed the necessary paperwork for incorporation here in Colorado. We had about 20 people show up for our organizational meeting at the 1987 Annual CAS Encampment. I was voted in as the first WAA President, Leni, as Vice President, and Charlie took on the Secretary-Treasurer duties... Board of Directors: Tim Boucher, Doug Bowman, Scott Leslie (deceased), and Barbara Snobble....Can that really be 20 years ago?

The WAA was officially recognized by the State of Colorado as a non-profit corporation on Sept. 17, 1987. The logo carries a copy right date of 1988 because it was designed by Bill Tate in the year following incorporation.