

Primitive Bow Competition

Last Updated Tuesday, 17 February 2015 11:57



The Stone Age and Primitive Arts Festival host an annual archery contest. This contest is for primitive hand made bows and arrows. No modern bows or factory made arrows will be allowed. Contestants each receive five shots total at five predetermined distances at a numbered target. The archer with the highest average score wins the contest. There are prizes awarded for first, second and third place winners in both advanced and novice categories.

Most primitive cultures have at some time used the bow and arrow. Although some cultures like the Inca of South America and the Aborigines of Australia preferred the use of the Atlatl over the bow. This is definitely the exception and not the rule. As the technology of the bow and arrow spread throughout the world, the Atlatl although much easier to manufacture took the back seat to the much more stealthy and efficient bow and arrow.

The Iceman found frozen in an Alpine Glassier in northern Italy had an unfinished bow that looked very similar to the English longbow used in medieval times roughly 4500 to 5000 years later. The Iceman had died from being shot with a flint tipped arrow which penetrated deep enough into his body to cut one of his main arteries. All of the Iceman's arrows were still in their quiver near his body. Most all of the arrows were tipped with stone points with evidence of human and animal blood on them.



Primitive Bow Competition

Last Updated Tuesday, 17 February 2015 11:57

Many people speculate why his bow was not completed. I suspect that the bow found with the iceman was a backup bow that he was working on. His finished bow was probably taken by whoever killed him or dropped when he was shot at a different location. It takes knowledge and time to manufacture a good primitive bow. This investment in time and knowledge would make a bow an attractive bit of loot on a battlefield.

Bow and arrows have evolved into many shapes and forms. The Romans designed a massive crossbow that fired massive bolts used for siege warfare. The Stone Age people of Denmark made stone points with triangle cross sections that look as if they were made to penetrate armor. The Sioux Indians of North America and the Mongols of central Asia made very powerful short bows backed with horn, made to shoot from horseback. The Japanese made long laminated bows from bamboo. The list of styles and types of bows could go on forever.



When the first Europeans visited Florida they were impressed with the size of the native's long bows. The Spanish wrote that they were not able to pull the string back on the bows that the Timucuan Indians of North central Florida used. They also wrote that the chert tipped points would fragment and would go through the Spanish chain mail armor.

The natives in Florida used a variety of different woods to make bow and arrows. Bows were made from Red Mulberry, Long Leaf Pine, Black Cherry and various different oak varieties and could be made of less desirable woods if in a place that better woods were not found. An example would be when the Seminoles were pushed down into the Everglades, they started using cypress for their bows. Cypress is not a good bow wood but will work if nothing else is available. Arrows in Florida were also made from a variety of woods but the very best and most sought after was switch cane or river cane, which is a type of native bamboo. The Spanish mentioned the use of this cane in their narratives of early Florida expeditions. Imagine what each thought when they first encountered the other -

a nearly seven foot tall Timucuan Indian carrying a long bow longer than the height of the five foot six inch Spaniard with white skin and hair on his face, riding a horse which looked like a giant antlerless deer to the native. I bet it was a shock for both parties. Modern compound bows

Primitive Bow Competition

Last Updated Tuesday, 17 February 2015 11:57

have evolved into arrow shooting machines with not much in common with the first bows, other than they shoot arrows.

Registration for this competition will take place onsite.