

The Villages Archery Club History Recalled by Ubbo Bulman

This report is being written at the request of Wally Krull when he visited my home in May, 2015 and is what I recall happening before and during my presidency.

When I came to The Villages, The Villages Recreation Center assured me that we will have an archery range. Not knowing at that time that Wally Krull and Bill Jensen were already dealing with Monica Anderson from The Villages for a future archery range.

One day I was surprised to read in The Villages Daily Sun, "anyone interested in archery, should come to a special meeting at the Santiago Recreation Center." There it was proven that 35 people were interested in archery.

When we finally got the archery range it was located on Rio Grande Avenue right next to the existing air rifle range. It belonged to the Chula Vista Recreation Center. Terry Wilson was the director for the recreation center. He was also the director for the Tiera Del Sol Recreation Center, which is where we held our monthly club meeting.

I don't know if we ever had an official opening for our club. But our first club president was Bill Jensen and Don Selby was our vice president. Betty Claspel was our secretary. We were known as The Village Archers. For us to get to our range we had to go through the rifle range. It was very awkward to get through the rifle range when both clubs were active, but finally after many years of trying, The Villages gave me permission to cut through the wooden fence next to the mail station.

We had a shooting line at the entrance of the range, at the 60-yard line we had a row of 5-foot diameter bales of hay. The range was approximately 30 yards wide.

The target stands were made out of PVC piping and we used feed bags for targets. Bill Jensen painted archery targets on the bags. Wally Krull drove to Deland, Florida, and got good clean cotton rags without buttons and etc. that could damage our arrows. The stuffed feed bags served a good purpose for quite some time.

Carroll Rogers became our next president and I don't know who his vice president was.

By now I was interested to compete again in archery and made contact with Tim Austin from the Florida's Sport Foundation. Tim Austin is also the president of the Gators Archers in Gainesville, Florida. After a few meetings with Tim, I became a member of the National Field Archery Association.

Austin invited all members from our club to the Florida State Senior games on December 2, 2001 in Cypress Gardens in Winter Haven, Florida. Today it's called Lego Land. This was our club's first archery event away from home base. I don't remember how many from our club came to this event It was an overnigher with a parade and dinner.

For this event in Cypress garden our member John Harmon's wife, Marge, ordered polo shirts for the club. They were golden in color and had the member's names and an image of a single archer on the shirt. Also our club's name at that time, Village Archers, was silk-screened on the

shirts. By now I was tired repairing the PVC target stands and ask Terry Wilson from the Recreation Center to buy us 2x4 lumber so I could build some "A" type target stands. I cut all the lumber at the range and the club members assembled them. I had built ten of them for each yard from 20 to 60 yards. I also connected two "A" frames together with 2 x 4 x 10 and hung the feed bags from them. YES, they were still using feed bags.

Now Tim Austin invited our Club to another shoot at the Gator Bowman range in the area of the Gainesville Municipal Airport. That is when Tim told me to ask The Villages to sponsor our club for membership in the Florida Sport Foundation and the National Field Archery Association. Yes, we were glad to do this and paid our dues from then on.

One of our original members, but not very active was Sonny Niemier. a retired state trooper from Kentucky. He brought the attention of the National and State Senior Games to The Villages.

I accepted the task to run the Florida State Senior Games for three years. Now that the senior games were coming to The Villages, I had to build all new target frames as per state regulation. The Villages bought 20 new Styrofoam targets and replacement centers from American Whitetail Target Company. So I made a stock list of materials and everything was delivered to our range. I cut everything and drilled all the holes and the club members helped me with them. We had many months to do all this and to practice with the new targets.

The suggestion was made by Marshall Campbell that we should have lessons for archery. I get permission from the Rec Department to give lessons at the Hacienda Recreation Center for two nights of three hours each. We used fiberglass bows and arrows. Marshall also built 10 very simple bows. After these lessons we had eight new members. Marshall Campbell, Frank Skvarek and I visited a few adult communities in the area. We wanted to see if they would be interested in starting archery so we could have competitive shoots. Only the Plantation in Leesburg built an archery range. We had three different events with them - two events at our range and one at their range,

The very first State Senior game here in The Villages was held on 'Sunday, December 2, 2002 at the Saddle Brook softball field. Tim Austin had a very good system for registering all the archers. He gave me a copy of it. My Vice President was Larry Conrad.

I had permission from John Rohan for our club to have an archery event of a 900 round at our range at Rib Grande one week before the Senior Games. Tim Austin, and other friends I had made during my activity in archery, had advertised our 900 round at our range in The Villages. The Rec Department set up two tents and two tables and chairs and a bucket with ice and Gatoraide

I had also ordered medals for the winners from Olympia Trophies in Hagerstown, Maryland. This is also the very first time our club made some money.

Marshall Campbell, one of our members, made a suggestion that after the 900 round, we should ask the archers if they would like to stay a little longer and have some fun and play five card stud. We placed five playing cards backyard on each of four targets. It cost \$.25 per arrow to shoot five arrows. Whoever had the best score and won that shoot made money. Everyone was happy and all had a good time.

Saturday afternoon before the senior games the Recreation Department had brought all our targets and Stand to the ballpark. The Rec Dept had laid out the range wrong and the archers were shooting into the sun all day.

Barbara Hall, the Kite lady of The Villages, and one of our members, had the field decorated with flying balloons and kites over the area. Some members wanted to practice that evening. They brought their cars and directed their headlights to light up the targets.

Sunday morning, Tim Austin came to run the games like he always does for the State and National Games. The Rec Department would not listen to him either about the direction we should be shooting. It was a good sunny day, so we had to shoot the entire 900 round directly into the bright sun.

One Sunday afternoon when the shoot was over, everybody pitched in to take the targets down. The stands were built so that they could be disassembled. and, by the way, I had built the stands so that we could disassemble them into many pieces. It was a good day of shooting.

Tim Austin and I were the only ones left at the ball field when John Rohan showed up to tell us that the field had to be empty. Everything has to be off the field because at 7:30 in the morning there was going to be a softball game. Tim and I put all the targets on top of his car and brought them out to the parking lift. Then Tim, also, helped me to take all the pieces of the target stands out into the parking Lot. That afternoon I asked Tim Austin to write a letter to John Rohan at The Villages Recreation Department stating that if The Villages cannot accommodate a better shooting arrangement for the next two senior games, that the State Archery event will be cancelled in The Villages. That is when the archery event was moved to the polo field, which does not belong to The Villages but is private property of the Morse family. We held this senior archery event there for the next two years.

John Rohan was busy for the rest of the afternoon but John asked me to meet him at the saloon next to the Fiesta Bowl. There we talked for a few hours and I talked to him about the nice archery event we had the week before and the Rec Department supported us with tents tables, etc. And that we also made a little money. So John said to me "Ubbo, Why don't you have a few invitational events at the range so your club can raise some money that you need for things that The Villages wouldn't get for you?" But remember that your club would be the only club that is allowed to invite other clubs into The Villages besides Senior Games.

At the first senior games at the ballpark, we had over 80 archers. The Villages Woodshop had just opened and they built more target stands for future events. The Villages supplied the materials for these stands.

I also realized that we needed diapers for the back of the targets. I asked Bruce Dan, one of our new club members, if he would make them for us. The Rec Department paid him for that. Ron Haller and his wife Jeannine made the flags for over the targets.

With all the shooting and changing faces, I also thought about the plastic pins we used for fastening the faces to the thick Styrofoam target. I had a better idea After that shoot at the ballpark, I picked up signs from people's yards that contractors left on the lawns. These signs were made from very heavy wire. I cut them into 7 inch pieces and shaped them into staples. I must have made hundreds of them, and I see the club is still using the same method

Since The Villages Recreation Department is also a member of the NFAA, they can also buy the target faces from them. I would order the faces from Tim Austin and he would give me the price. The Villages gave me a check for them and I would pick them up at Tim's house in Gainesville or would meet him at an archery event. We would do that for many years. In the spring of 2003 many of our club members went to a National Seniors Games In Chesapeake, Virginia. That time I was the only recurve shooter in the club but we had at least five or six compound shooters.

Right after these games, I was asked to participate with our club at the indoor/outdoor Expo at the Hacienda Rec. Center. I had to find a spot for our booth. I picked one spot right at the door because I also wanted a spot outside to demonstrate archery. The spot they gave me then, we still used today. For this Expo I had a Plexiglas sign made to hang on the back wall. I had to call John Rohan for the correct name of our club. I knew The Village Archers was not the right name. John Rohan told me the correct name had to be The Villages Archery Club. I had that put on the new sign.

For many years I collected heavy cardboard on which I mounted the target faces. We did have some plastic storage bins at the old range, but not what we needed to store all the mounted bases. I stored all the faces on the cardboard at my home in the garage. The large foam targets were stored at the Saddlebrook swimming pool. I took pictures of my garage to show John Rohan explaining that something has to happen.

He was asked if maybe we could build a building at our range in which we could work and store things. That was not possible because our range was on leased property that could not be bought. Even the postal station and air rifle range is on leased property.

Time had passed when John Rohan called me and asked me to look at the property east of Route 441 North of the golf Cart Bridge. A deal had fallen through for a Bob Evans restaurant making the property possibly available. I looked at the property and it is where we are now with our range. It used to be an official golf driving range and repair shop.

I sent the "attached" letter with my suggestions to John Rohan. A few weeks later John Rohan told me to get ready to move. I had to promise him that the club would do some of the work to make it possible. They steam cleaned the building, but we had to paint the building and do many other things. A few people of our club did not agree with my promise that we would help with the range, but we did everything they expected of us to do. The Village Rec Department supplied the lumber for the fencing of the range and members of our club helped The Villages maintenance people.

As we moved into the new range, I gave up my presidency and Thomas Lange became the new president with Hilton Henderson being vice-president. I still considered myself the club's handyman. I laid out the range and marked every target position with a round marker, different colors for different distances. Thomas Lange bought some pavers that were imbedded into the ground at the shooting line at every shooting position with brass numbers glued to the top.

A year later someone had the idea to move the shooting line 10 yards back into the shade. At least four of our five targets had the benefit of the shade. I embedded the pavers at that line also. In a very short time while we were using the range, people broke into the building we were using for general purpose. They broke the sliding window. There was nothing in the

building to steal. At that time I asked the villagers to close the window permanently, but they wanted the building to look like it was built.

During the moving process. Thomas and I had The Villages buy a lot of equipment from Lancaster Archery Supply that we needed for teaching archery. Not long after all that equipment was delivered someone broke into the building again. All the new equipment we bought was stolen and the police found a lot of that stuff in the swimming pool at the Orange Blossom Country Club. They also found equipment in some of the pawnshops. Now they agreed with me to close the wall permanently. Wally Krull built the cabinet that is currently in the building. Many members brought tools from home.

After a while. I realized that all our tools were rusting from the humidity. I asked Ron Snyder if he could put an air conditioner unit in that would control the humidity.

Once we settled into the new range. I laid out our range for a FITA round with plastic markers. Frank Skvarek and I practiced for the FITA. It raised quite a problem in the beginning, but the following year, our club hosted a ½ FITA at our range. We had a very good crowd. It started to rain and I don't know who but somebody stopped the shoot. The Ocala crowd insisted we open the range again and we did. We had the trophy celebration for all ages and we had a good time.

We have been using our target frames since 2002. Blair Peterson, our new president, suggested that we needed new ones and asked the Rec Department if The Villages wood shop would build them for us. But their answer was no. The Rec Department brought the materials for our club and I volunteered to run that project. Most members of the club volunteered to disassemble the old and rebuild the new ones. We had to use the old hardware. Nick Kormick brought his spray equipment and painted them all. The whole project took four days.

In 2011, a lot of our club members went to Houston, Texas for the National Senior Games. While we were gone, the range was closed for The Villages to work on building a cover over the shooting line. I had requested this in letter to John Rohan in the very beginning. I don't think he was ever asked what we needed as far as a cover for the shooting line.

Well, when we came back from the games, we had this monstrous structure there, definitely hurricane proof.