

By Gene Wensel

The name John Schulz is quickly recognized among longbow shooters everywhere. At about the same time, twenty plus years ago, John and I both moved our families to the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana. There, John and his loving wife Jane raised eleven beautiful children to adulthood.

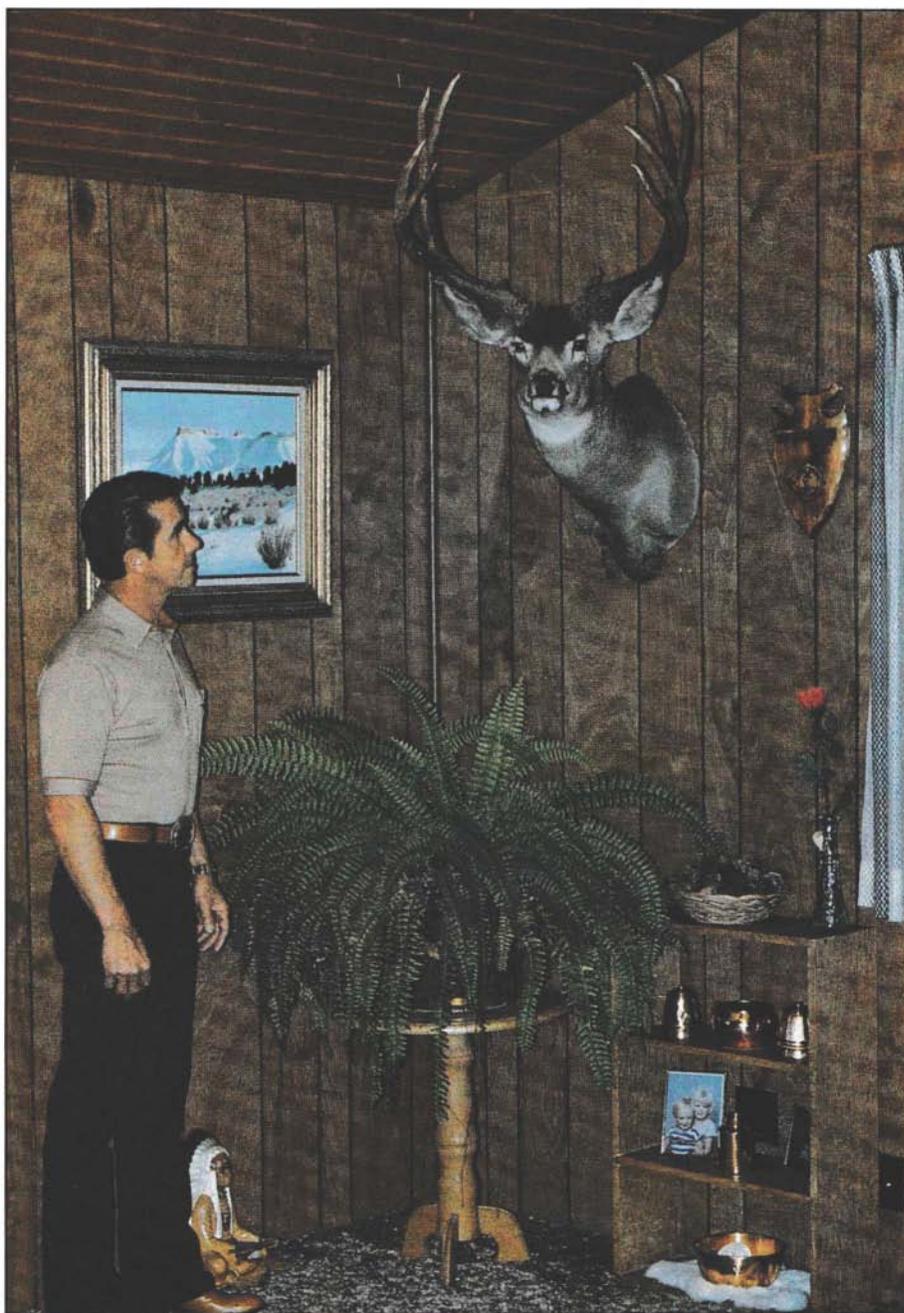
I must admit knowing the Schulz family has made me a better person. Hanging around John's bow shop and attending his church influenced my life in many ways.

My own Dad, gone years before I met John Schulz, was a big fan of Howard Hill. Dad shot his first deer with a bow in 1953, using a lemonwood longbow, wood arrow and a Howard Hill broadhead. My own father was very influenced by Howard Hill.

To have come under the influence of world renowned archery personality such as Howard Hill is bound to make a lasting impression on most anyone. But John Schulz's acquaintance with this archery great had both an immediate and long term effect that changed the whole course of his life.

Many archers have seen Howard Hill shoot the bow, both on film and in person. Again, I remember my Dad commenting on Hill's fantastic vision. Something about Howard's eyes fascinated my father. Many bowmen even got lucky enough to receive personal pointers from Hill himself. With John Schulz, it was a different story. Day after day, week after week, the instruction continued. Since Mr. and Mrs. Hill had no children, John and his brother Dan became "his boys." Howard was dedicated in teaching them to the best of his ability because in them he found somewhat of an extension of himself. He not only taught them to shoot, but entrusted to them the finer points of bowmaking. When John and Dan opened their shop, Howard would make frequent trips to visit and encourage

PHOTO THIS PAGE—*This mule deer buck is John's all time favorite. Scored 174 Pope & Young.*



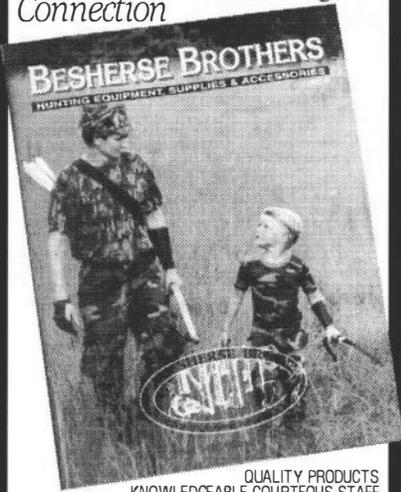
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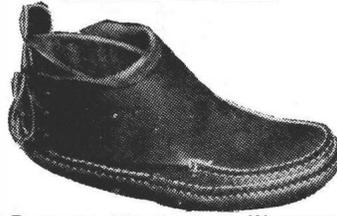
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the boys. Mrs. Hill said Howard was thrilled when he realized he finally found someone whom he felt would not deviate from his style of shooting or his type of equipment.

It soon became obvious to Howard that John had a natural talent for bow-making...both in craftsmanship and artistic ability. Regarding a certain bow, Howard once wrote to John saying if he could build it, "I will take a back seat to you as a bowyer." After receiving and shooting that particular bow, Howard commented that it was "the most near perfect bow" he had ever seen anyone make. Hill continually complimented John's artistic flair by constantly referring to him as "one fine bowmaker."

Toward the end of Hill's life, Howard would write John whenever he wanted a certain type bow. John made all of these last personal bows for Howard. Needless to say, Howard Hill had a lot of confidence in John Schulz as a bowyer. Today, thousands of archers once again proved Hill right by prizing the bows John Schulz crafted.

It seemed only natural for John and his brother Dan to emulate Howard with exhibitions and trick-shooting. John many times tossed disks and coins for Howard as he put on demonstrations to business clubs, schools, scouts, etc. John always ended their performances by wing-shooting, especially coins. Over the next several years John continued doing exhibitions while Dan got involved with other endeavors.

For over thirty-five years now, John Schulz has shot his bow and arrows before groups of all sizes and descriptions. From high school assemblies to business clubs, to audiences numbering in the thousands at the Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival, John Schulz continues to draw spontaneous applause for his spectacular shooting.

I always wanted to attend the Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival. Held in Forksville, PA for many years now, it annually attracts thousands of bowhunters from all over the country. Because their affair is held in September when I'm routinely hunting elsewhere, I'd never made it to the festival. In 1988, with tragic forest fires engulfing much of the mountain West, the opening of our Montana bow season



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was postponed until rain. John invited me to join him on tour at the Forksville extravaganza. I jumped at the chance.

Bill Feese, chairman of the Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival, wrote about John. "The Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival is the largest non-competitive archery event in the world. It has been held annually for the past nineteen years in the Endless Mountains of Sullivan County. Each year as a special attraction, some of the best archers in the world are invited to the festival to demonstrate their skill. In 1975, John Schulz participated in this event, along with six state, national and world champions. In front of an audience of three to four thousand very critical bowmen, John put on a most remarkable demonstration of his shooting ability. His display of trick-shooting, explanation of the use of the longbow as a hunting tool and the personal account of his friendship with Howard Hill was the high point of the festival. We have had many world and Olympic champions at the festival. None of them received the attention or compliments that John Schulz did."

That's quite a statement. Yes, John Schulz has carried on the Howard Hill tradition with his talents of making as well as shooting the bow and arrow. While practicing for the filming of his video *Hitting 'Em Like Howard Hill*, John hit over ten consecutive aspirin tablets in succession tossed into the air. I think everyone who has ever seen John shoot will attest to the fact he has mastered the bow.

I'd like to relay a couple short accounts of John Schulz the bowhunter.

Many years ago, John and I were hunting an old apple orchard being raided nightly by several big black bears. I could see my friend John in a tree a bow shot across from me. At dusk, a big bear entered the orchard from the west, as they regularly did. The bruin circled the apple trees as he sniffed the wind for danger. With a little luck I hoped he'd pass between one of our bows. I'd nicknamed this big bear "Gus." I came close to tagging him several times previously while he gorged on the sweet September apples.

As the big bear circled toward John's treestand, I grew anxious to see Schulz perform under the pressure of a real hunting situation. I'd seen him shoot many coins out of the air and nock and shoot a quiver full of arrows faster than I thought humanly possible, but I'd yet to witness him shoot an arrow at a big game animal.

"Gus" drew nearer. I could see John was visibly tense, concentrating on the bear's movement, waiting for the perfect allowable opportunity that proper timing would soon present. Suddenly the bear hit my scent stream, sensed trouble and wheeled, frantically running at full speed. In one fluid motion, John leaned out around a portion of the tree he was in, and with precision timing, drew and released on the running bear. The white feathered shaft seemed to go into slow motion as I saw it and the big bear converge at about twenty-five yards. The white fletching disappeared behind the bear's left shoulder as the broadhead cut through the

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The year was 1954, and John, center, and his brother Dan, right, went on their first hunt with Howard Hill in Utah.

heart. The big bruin made it possibly thirty or forty paces when he stumbled and died in full flight. "Easier said than done," I said to myself. Looking at each other, we both grinned.

Less than forty-eight hours later, I helped John track and drag out a big buck he killed. It was one of the largest mule deer taken in the United States that season. The tracking job on that buck was one of the most difficult I've ever been on. We didn't give up, even when it got down to finding a single speck of the buck's saliva. Shortly thereafter, John found half of a cut deer hair on a buckskin log. I knew right then what Howard Hill meant when he told John he had the "eyes of an eagle." The monster buck lay dead not far ahead.

John and I have a mutual friend by

the name of Jack Barrett. Barrett is an excellent bowhunter, woodsman and knifemaker from Georgia.

Jack once told me the story of the time he, Schulz and Roland Griffin of Alabama were hunting antelope on the windswept broken flats of Wyoming. It'd been a frustrating week, trying to stalk up on spooky critters. Finally, Barrett made an excellent shot. "Right through the heart!" he said. With a big grin, Jack later tossed the pronghorn's heart to John. "Hoss, that's gonna be hard to beat," Jack said as he continued dressing out his antelope. John handed the heart to Roland, who pointed out the broadhead had nearly cut the top off the pronghorn's heart.

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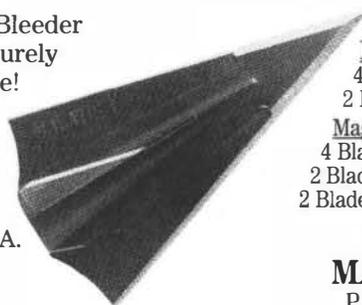
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evening to hunt, they loaded Barrett's pronghorn into the back of the pickup and headed out. Coming around the point of a hill, the bowhunters ran right into a heard of about thirty antelope. As Barrett stopped the truck, John eased out of the passenger side. "Shoot the big fat doe on the left," Jack whispered. Carefully taking his bow from the bed of the pickup, John nocked an arrow and stepped off the Jeep trail behind the truck. In one smooth move, the arrow was gone. At impact, the opposite front leg of the antelope turned crimson. She trotted forty yards and went down. Dressing her out, John removed the pronghorn's heart, looked it over, and with a wide smile, pitched it to Barrett. "Your heart shot is hard to beat, but I think this one will do it." Jack Barrett shook his head as he examined John's broadhead hole...it couldn't have been more geometrically centered.

Hunting with another friend (Jack Amann) one time, a quail showed it's head at about fifteen yards. John drew, shot and took the bird's head off with a blunt. As the first quail fluttered, a second ran out. John quickly drew another blunt and beheaded that one too! Two arrows, two headless quail! Not bad!

John isn't afraid to shoot a second arrow. Sitting on a knoll in the rugged hills of Southern Oregon, Gary Sentman once watched John make a stalk on a wild feral goat. Bedded among the roots and dirt of a big fir blowdown, the goat offered a difficult target at best. Easing around a tree, John loosed an arrow from about thirty yards. The shot was too high and the billy was immediately up running. When the goat stopped momentarily, John's second shaft took him cleanly. Later the same day, Schulz made another excellent shot, centering this second billy in the "boiler room." Sentman asked jokingly, "You're a little blood thirsty today, aren't you?" "No," John replied, "This second one was just to make sure you knew the earlier one wasn't an accident!"

Anyone who knows John very well will be quick to tell you he NEVER equates his shooting accuracy with that of Howard Hill's. Yet here is a personally taught student of Hill's who has indeed done some extraordinary shooting. Let's ask him some questions.

Tell us about your early years, shooting with Howard Hill.

Howard was a world famous celebrity. Everything about him confirmed that fact. His personal charisma was overwhelming. His home was a beautiful two story southern colonial house set on an elegantly landscaped estate. The entire estate was surrounded by a chain-link fence for total privacy. He usually only kept one set of straw

bales, which were used primarily for shooting form or as a backstop for moving targets. Throughout the shrubs, bushes and pepper trees were interspersed piles of sand, which were some of Howard's favorite backstops.

It was to this scene of elegance and simplicity Dan and I would arrive those many balmy southern California mornings for our practice sessions. Other times Howard had a small gathering of friends over for a fun shoot. Whenever

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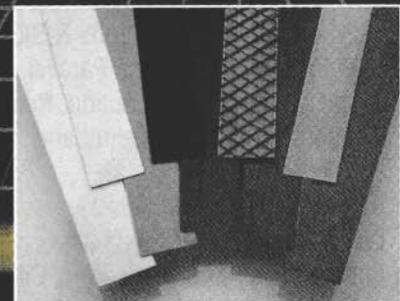
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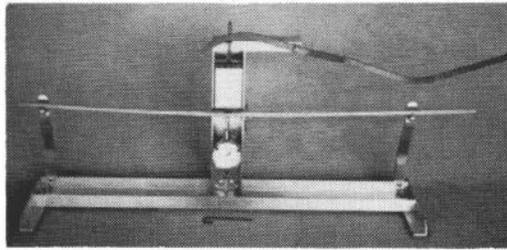
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anyone put a little pressure on Howard during our fun shoots, he'd say "Okay boys. Only one arrow to a target from now on." Here he excelled.

Howard was a very relaxed, down-to-earth person. He was one of the most humble men I've ever known. Mrs. Hill was a truly gracious Christian lady of high principles. Her manner was such that men would rise and stand when she walked into the room. To eat a formal dinner with the Hills (maid, butler and all) was an experience never to be forgotten. Yet at a backyard barbecue fun shoot, Mrs. Hill was "one of the gang." And you had better not get careless shooting if she had her bow and arrows!

I suppose one of the things that upsets me the most is when I read SUPPOSED quotes from Howard Hill which are flagrant bragging. Howard Hill was no braggart. Writers falsely put words into his mouth at times that give the wrong impression of him. However, if he told you he could make a shot, you'd best keep your money in your pocket. In almost all his endeavors he radiated strong self-confidence, yet never arrogance.

Many authorities who never met Mr. Hill nor saw him shoot are quick to tell all about his style. One author describes a tournament style of holding the bow and goes on to say that's the way the great Howard Hill did it. Not so! An observant person could find a dozen pictures of Hill shooting the bow and not one will show him holding the bow as that author described. In all my shooting lessons, he never showed that style to me except to make fun of it. I suspect many authors would like to believe Hill shot the bow exactly the way THEY do!

I've given the Hill-style lessons to several now well known individuals who went on to adapt their own techniques. My friend Fred Asbell came to Hamilton, Montana years ago to spend a weekend with me learning the Hill style of shooting. He has since developed his own method from that style. Paul Brunner is another one who now has his own style. When Bob Wesley hunted on my team at the National Bowhunt, at his request I studied his shooting form. "Your bow arm is too straight," I told him. "It's more of a tournament style." He also has his own style, which is fine with me as long as people

don't pass it off as the true Hill method.

When did you and Dan make bows for Howard Hill?

Howard had closed down his North Hollywood shop sometime around 1945 and had no archery business per se during the time he prepared for his trip to Africa. When he returned, he began teaching Dan and me to shoot and build bows. We built and reworked bows for many of his celebrity friends during that period. We also glassed and finished the bamboo staves he brought back from Japan. Most of these bows were marketed through Shawnee Archery.

When I moved to northern California in the late 50's, Ted Ekin, Dick Garver and Howard put together the re-opening of Howard Hill Archery. In reality, there was no Howard Hill Archery for about thirteen or fourteen years.

During the 50's and 60's, Dan and I developed our own line of longbows, built just like we learned, marketing them in conjunction with the bows we built for Howard Hill himself. No one else was a bowyer for Howard at that time.

It seems during those days, Dan and I were the only "longbow" advertisers in any national magazine. Nowadays, magazines are filled with ads for longbows, some built by newcomers who consider themselves "master bowyers."

I can pretty much look at the lines of a braced bow and tell how it will shoot. Some will kick like a mule and be very unstable to say the least. What a dilemma for a newcomer to be introduced to longbows, only to become quickly disillusioned to the point they want to give up traditional archery.

Then there's the fallacy that "kick" is to be expected, so just learn to live with it. I can't believe how many people call me to tell how certain brands of bows kick in their hands. Many new bowmakers need to do some homework on limb function and design. Instead, they come up with some sort of unproven design and end up putting out a "bastard" type bow. I've never changed either tiller or the limb

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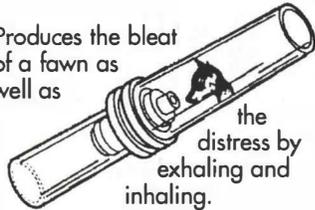
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design I learned from Howard Hill almost forty years ago.

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My glass backed bows earned a reputation of fastest on the market. Over 200 fps was not uncommon. One year at the Pennsylvania Bow Festival, a 68" 72# at 28" bow of mine shot a wood arrow with a field tip through the Jennings chronograph at three identical readings of 227 fps. Gene, you have one of my bows that shot through the chronograph in Missoula at 257 fps with a lighter target arrow. I certainly know about speed, however my mind kept going back to Howard's words, "A slower bow will be easier to shoot." I studied several of Howard's earlier bows. One that especially impressed me was a yew bow with bamboo backing.

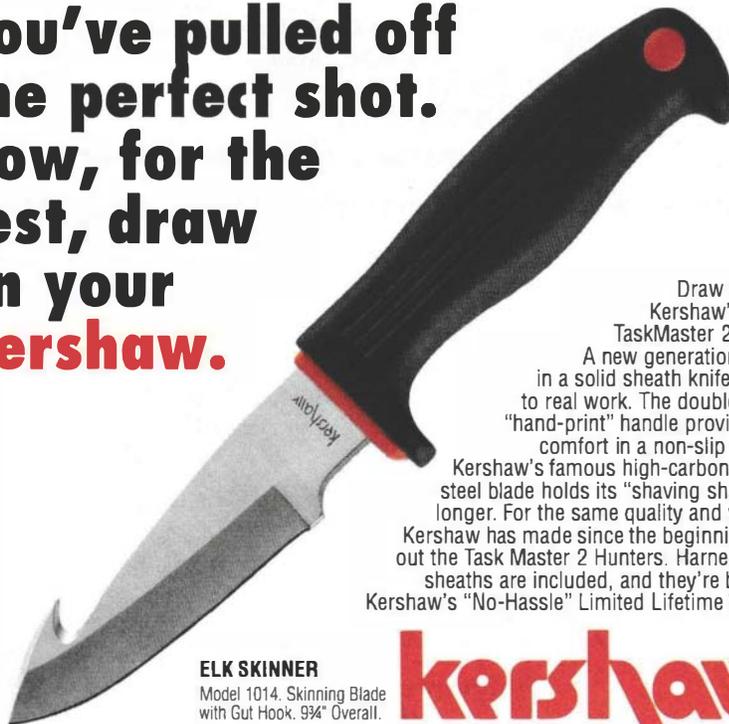
I found a twenty year old yew fence post, split it, paired the billets, backed it with bamboo and finished it out. When I finally shot it, I expected it to be slow. It was a little slower, but the first thing I noticed was how smooth and easy it shot and how tight my groups were. After a year of shooting these "Naturals" (tm), I sold most of my personal glassed bows and hung up the others. My sons have done the same.

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I have three models. All bamboo, laminated Osage and laminated Hickory. All are bamboo backed. The Osage is one of the nicest shooting bows I've ever owned. Hickory is, in my opinion, the most underrated bow wood around. Backed with bamboo, it shoots comparable to Osage.

I've discontinued my yew bows for several reasons. Namely, the yew's high toxicity affects my health, its decreased availability and some inherent inconsistencies of the wood itself. After half a life-time building bows, Howard Hill concluded there was no finer material for bows than bamboo. After forty years, I'm of the same opinion. I'm still using most of the same procedures and materials we used in Howard's shop when we first started. I build each of them in the true Hill method. I feel confident my all-bamboo model (which I've named the "Grandpa" in honor of Howard's all time favorite) will earn the reputation of John Schulz's all-time best model.

Give us some of your thoughts on bowhunting today.

I've never been known as a fence-stradler, so there's no need of changing now. High tech makes me want to divorce myself from archery. If I was after the kind of accuracy and speed so many of today's archers request, I'd just unlimber my old .270. When Dan and I grew up, we hunted with rifles and shotguns to the point where there was little challenge left. That's why we took up the bow in the first place.

Face paint, military camo, tree-stands, estrus lures, "breath camo," etc. may be efficient, but in my opinion that "ain't huntin'." I'd rather slip up on a big gray nosed mule in his bed and MISS the shot than kill five average deer from a tree. Sour grapes? Not so, because I've certainly killed my share stalking.

Fred Asbell had an excellent article awhile back on setting personal hunting goals. What's your bottom line? Keeping score so you're a better hunter? Number of kills don't necessarily make a bowhunter. One fellow told me he had killed over fifty deer from one treestand in a persimmon

patch...none over fifteen yards away. My reply? "In a situation like that, you ought to be able to load your pickup truck with deer." I'm afraid with many, it's a big ego problem that eventually effects credibility. It all boils down to how you set your values. I've killed one animal from a treestand...that was enough for me.

I used to think it strange when Howard "mellowed" toward killing game. Now I'm beginning to understand. I still love bowhunting, but anymore, the kill is just the frosting on the cake.

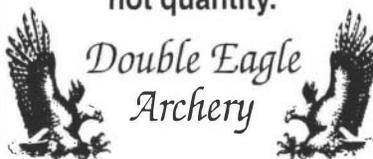
I have some very strong feelings on bowhunter image. I can't relate to the new breed of sloppy looking dudes who pass themselves off as slobs. Many of them are good hunters and fine shots, yet they don't seem to care how they appear to the non-hunting public. It's almost as if it was cool to appear as an uncouth slob. I've seen them sitting in the back of a pickup in full camo, face-paint and all...road hunting! What are they using for brains? Maybe those deer can't see them in the bed of the pickup truck?

We won the National Bowhunt several times against major bow company teams. We were the ONLY team that never wore military camo. I abhor military camo. Somebody did a whale of a marketing job on that stuff. One fellow I know even wears camo underwear! Any observant follower of Howard Hill

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1st Place '93

- Howard Hill World Championship*, AL
- IBO World Longbow Championship, IL
- Morman Lake Shoot, AZ
- Kansas Traditional Archery Championship*
- Great Lakes Longbow Invitational*, MI
- Muzzy Stump Shoot, NY
- Stick Bow Round Up, TX
- Lofton Classic*, MS
- High Plains Archery Classic*, WY
- New Zealand Triple Crown, NZ

1st Place '92

- Howard Hill World Championship*
- IBO World Longbow Championship
- Great Lakes Longbow Championship*
- Oklahoma State Championship*
- Lonestar State Championship
- New York Muzzy Stump Shoot
- Minnesota Trail Shoot
- Texas State Bow Round Up*

* 1st Place Both Men and Womens' Divisions



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would be quick to note he always looked neat and well dressed, even in hunting camp. Hill had class. You'll never see me in military camo unless they dress me in it for my funeral.

Camo arrows are real good for the arrow business...think that one over. One year, just to prove a point to myself, I built a bow with white glass on both sides, shot white shafts with white feathers and used that outfit to kill a nice buck. Both of us had our feet on the ground when I shot him, too.

Howard waxed his bows to a polish. I do the same. I feel bowhunting skill is not in how much military camo you wear, but how well you know your quarry and how good you can stalk. Want the bowhunting thrill of a lifetime? Make about an hour stalk on a bedded critter, get up within twenty yards and arrow him. That's hard to improve on. When I'm hunting, I like to keep it between the animal and me. Incidentally, I don't "harvest" game...I kill it.

What do you feel is your greatest achievement to date?

That will take some thought. I'm

presently working on two books. One is a manual on building composite longbows. The other covers everything from hunting stories to my association with Howard Hill.

I suppose the production and distribution of my video *Hitting 'Em Like Howard Hill* has been the most rewarding so far. I'm not speaking of monetary reward, but what that video has done for traditional bow shooters. We have stacks of letters from people all across the country who took time to write. I couldn't begin to keep track of how many people called. Generally they say about the same thing...words like "I've been frustrated with my shooting for years. I've read books and seen other videos but couldn't make them work. After watching your video and putting it into practice, I've improved so much I just had to call to tell you."

Many say they notice I contradict almost everything they've ever read or watched...but it works! There's a reason for this. Read this next statement slowly...I accurately teach the true Hill style. That's why it works.

Many people have told me they compare my shooting style to the old Howard Hill movies and notice I shoot more like Howard Hill than anyone they've ever seen. I suppose that's the way it should be...he was my only teacher.

Before we produced this video, I had to give serious thought to the return of my investment. However, my greatest influence was the responsibility I felt to accurately pass on the unbeatable style of the great Howard Hill. The Bible says, "What do you have that you did not receive." Howard's personal teaching gave me an edge in shooting, hunting and bowmaking. As I've said before, what success I've had in archery, I attribute to God and Howard Hill. I HAD to pass it on. I consider it my greatest accomplishment to date.

Putting it all together, it's no wonder Mrs. Hill wrote of John, "Among the thousands of archery friends and admirers of my late husband Howard Hill, if I were picking one to describe and explain Howard's methods in every detail, I know no one who I would trust to do so correctly, fully and in detail as I do John Schulz." Thanks John.

John Schulz...Master of the arts.



Congratulations are due Richard Torlai of Barre, MA on this 180 lb. Russian Boar taken with his 67 lb. Howard Hill longbow. Richard exclaims, "Once again I find myself writing the Howard Hill crew just to let you know that you indeed have the finest archery equipment in the world! I shot my boar through the front shoulder with a Howard Hill broadhead and my original Howard Hill bow and I just love that Hill equipment. It's the **best!** There's many a self-proclaimed bowyer supposedly making the 'best bows around,' and they're all good, but I tell people if they really want the **best**, buy a Howard Hill bow!"

Signed,
"One Proud Owner"

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