

WISCONSIN BOWHUNTERS ASSOCIATION®

President's Message

Winter 2016

In 2016 Wisconsin Bowhunters Association is celebrating our 75th anniversary. Wow... 75 years. It's hard to even imagine all the things we now consider old that weren't even around 75 years ago. Forget about computers and cell phones, commercial TVs didn't even exist back then.

Hunting certainly was different. The cotton long johns and heavy wool coats have since been replaced with Thinsulate and Gore-tex. Most rifles now have scopes, and bows, well let's just say bows have progressed too. Small game hunting was bigger then, perhaps because Wisconsin didn't have a lot of deer 75 years ago.

But that didn't stop a bunch of "radical" archery enthusiasts from forming an organization to promote hunting with a bow and arrow. Seventy-five years ago deer hunting was difficult and extremely challenging by today's standards, even with a gun. Yet these folks wanted to challenge themselves more, a lot more. Was it to secure a long archery season? No, the first seasons were very short and limited to a few counties. Was it so they could get first crack at big bucks before the gun season? No, the first bow seasons were often during or after the gun season. Was it so they could wear camouflage around town and call themselves bowhunters? Heck no. Hunting camouflage wasn't even "invented" for many more years; and a bowhunter? Well, the public didn't even know what that was.

They did it to challenge themselves, and because they discovered something that it would take the rest of the world many years to figure out – bowhunting, because of the challenges and experiences it presents, is satisfying, exciting and very rewarding. They also formed this fledgling organization, in their own words, to "promote the sport of hunting with a bow and arrow and foster the education, fellowship and good sportsmanship of its members". Now, 75 years later, we are still enjoying the benefits of what they so carefully laid out.

There have been many great men and women that have been a part of WBH through those years. Folks like Roy Case, Larry and Shirley Whiffen and their sons, John Schoenike, Carl Hulbert, Val and Tom Williams, Ann Fancher, and Norb Mullaney are just a very few of those that have contributed – or are still contributing – to our success. Another notable member, acclaimed author and "the father of modern game management" Aldo Leopold, was an avid archer and an early and active member of WBH. Leopold, by the strength of his position and reputation, was very instrumental in convincing the Wisconsin Conservation Department to pioneer bowhunting seasons here that other states wouldn't even consider.

In 2016 we also embark on our next 75 years. It's hard to imagine that bowhunting in Wisconsin will experience the magnitude of changes than it has since 1941, but it's not unlikely. However, with your continued support, WBH will be here to meet them.

Happy anniversary WBH - and to everyone that is a part of it! --Mike

