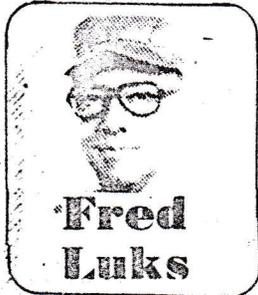


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San Marco: futurist in an ancient craft

In the area of custom archery equipment, there's a bowyer who is bringing a futuristic look to something old. The man is Frank San Marco, whose exquisitely handcrafted bows may be in-



fluencing many archers to revert to the classical longbow, a hunting, combat and sports instrument that has been around more than a thousand years.

San Marco is a 37-year-old school teacher who lives in Mahopac, teaches in the Ardsley Middle School and during spare time hours at home produces longbows and other archery equipment. Basically, what he's doing as far as bows are concerned, is revitalizing an old concept with 20th century know-how and up to date components.

It's a kind of historical turnaround, considering that in recent years there has been a trend away from the longbow to shorter recurves and the powerful compound with its maze of pulleys and string. Most hunters, today, employ the compound.

Yet, there are many archers around, and San Marco is one of them, who, like the classical style longbow, the challenge that it provides, and also its ease of handling. Talk to some of the longbow buffs and they'll tell you the longbow has a lot going for it, and it doesn't have to take a backseat to the recurve or compound.

The romance and simplistic design of the longbow has always appealed to him, says, says San Marco, and about four years ago he decided to build a bonbow that would be based on the historical but be improved with the addition of modern components and craftsmanship. It might have seemed like a formidable challenge, but not for San Marco who had studied engineering and is a skilled worker in wood.

Previous to embarking on bowmaking, he had been making guitars for 15

years. The experience gave him some knowledge and skills useful to making bows.

The San Marco longbow is a composite of yew wood laminated to fiber glass. Yew is the traditional wood for longbows and the choice of San Marco who says it's distinguished by stability and smoothness of draw. The yew which he gets for his bows comes from Oregon and has been seasoned 20 to 40 years.

Making a laminated bow is an arduous and painstaking process. Each component has to be milled and smoothed to perfection. San Marco says it takes him about 30 hours to complete a bow.

The finished product with its graceful lines and hand-rubbed finish of polyurethane is truly an artistic work. Each bow is identified in gold lettering with the name, "Traditional Longbow Company," a one-man firm that San Marco has formed, and a serial number.

Since each bow is custom made the name of the owner is also gold scripted on it. Before putting a bow into production Frank San Marco talks to the prospective owner to obtain ideas of personal preferences.

Recently, a San Marco bow underwent an evaluation by the Longbow Shooters Digest, a publication oriented to archers who shoot the classical longbow. There were such comments as "drawing smoothness was excellent" and "workmanship on this bow is without a doubt flawless — it is superb."

The San Marco bow has been equated with the finest of custom bows. There are also predictions that Frank San Marco will attain an eminence as one of the top bowyers of this generation.

San Marco also crafts arrows for his custom clientele. They are just as beautiful as the bows, and of course each arrow is matched to perform with a particular bow.

The San Marco longbow sells for \$300. Arrows go for \$34 a dozen. As is typical of many craftsmen, Frank San Marco does all his work in a home shop. He lives on Watermelon Hill Road, a woody retreat on the outskirts of Mahopac.