

***Archer**

(Continued from page 1.)

Think of it like a golf course, where the “holes” are three-dimensional, foam targets that look like various game animals – deer, bears, leopards, antelope, etc. So archers move from station to station, where they shoot at these animal targets at various distances, in varying settings.

“Instinctive” is how Sherry is classified in archery. She had no formal archery training or coaching when in 2009 her husband David brought home an old recurve bow. She tried it. “I was hooked!” she says.

That same year, Sherry looked into competing in the Mendenhall-Puckett area, where she and David, an avid hunter also, lived at the time before becoming Lexington residents in 2011.

“We had heard of Terry Thornton’s place in Brandon, Copperhead (Bows), on 471,” said Sherry, “every Thursday night people would meet out there. We would have these shoots, these little competitions. Then there was a bow shoot in Learned, Mississippi. That was the first one.”

That first competition using only traditional bows, like recurves and longbows, anchored her passion for shooting from that day forward.

When Sherry faces her target, whether a life-size 3D foam model of a mountain bear or a traditional small round bull’s-eye, surprisingly for her, gauging the distance isn’t essential.

“You stand there and you look at it, I’m like ‘OK I know I can’t aim dead at it. I’ve got to go up or down with my bow. But I don’t know exactly. Your brain kind of takes over...I don’t do the fine art of knowing exact distance,” Sherry explained. “(Competing archers) all miss at some point, that’s just part of it.”

Engaging with other traditional archers at competitions and elsewhere is a joy for Sherry, who considers them as kind.

“We’re always rooting for our fellow archers,” said Sherry, “no matter what, we may lose, but we’re always happy that our friends won. We all try to help each other.”

A large brown bruise covers Sherry’s upper left forearm, the sting of the bowstring is a new lesson she will not soon forget.

“I’ve never hit my arm when I shoot, in ten years,” Sherry explained, “All of a sudden, for some reason, I’ve been hitting it and I don’t own an arm guard. I’ve never had to have one.”

Another “first, first” for Sherry was winning first place

competing at the Howard Hill Classic in Alabama.

“That was 2010 or 2011... it’s safe to say the tears were...” Sherry pauses. “You feel so blessed just to be there, to actually shoot well enough to take first place, second or third, the top three.”

Blessings do come in many forms. A top three placing is a blessing for Sherry. Getting to that point involves much more than having good aim.

“Gas money to get where ever you’re going, your hotel accommodations, your entry fees, food, T-shirts, anything you may need, your arrows.” Sherry explained. “Those particular arrows I’m shooting are like \$190 bucks for twelve. That’s without nocks, fletching, that’s just a bare shaft arrow.”

Making it on Team USA gives pause to Sherry, enough for her stop mid-sentence, having to take a breath and regain composure. That blessing is still sinking in.

“This is such an honor and a privilege to do it,” Sherry said. “It is completely self funded. USA Archery takes care of nothing for the shooter. They’re just a platform, it’s strictly on the members to pay for everything. This is a very expensive trip.”

It’s still a trip of a lifetime. Sherry is not without the sup-

port, care and love of her family, coworkers at Barrett Law Office where she works as a legal assistant, and friends that have helped her over the years.

One friend and arrow fletcher for Sherry, Sam Sandifer, has been her general go-to and advisor on all things archery related for many years. His secret is that he works for Vans Sporting Goods. Sherry also credits Tony and Myrna Jetton for their untold support. Another friend, Calvin Smock, 2017 USA Team member and Gold Medal winner for World Archery 3D in Robion, France, pushed her into the 2019 USA Team trials in the Instinctive Class. Sherry thought she wasn’t good enough to compete at higher levels. All it took from Calvin was a “Yes, you are.”

While trying not to tear up, Sherry says David is the main object of her appreciation.

Sherry has not forgotten to thank the good Lord above for his help also.

“In two years from now if God allows me to live that long and to try this again,” said Sherry, “competition will be in Italy.”

Local efforts to help offset expenses for competing has been organized by some other supporters.

“Here at Barrett they’re doing a bake sale for me that’s

going to be August 12,” said Sherry. “So, that’s going to be a big help as well and anybody can pre-order casseroles, cakes, pies, anything like that.”

Sherry herself also has colorful Team USA rubber bracelets available to help raise funds.

In preparation for her departure on August 30, and gone through September 11, Sherry will be investing in an arm guard, practicing for an average range shoot of thirty-three yards and ironing her Team USA jersey which she’s very proud of.



Pictured above, Sherry Harrell-Pugh shows examples of the 3D life-size foam targets she’ll expect to see while competing for Team USA at the World Archery 3D Championship set in Lac La Biche, Canada in early September. (Courtesy Photo)

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