

Origin of the archery 'Clicker'

Did you ever wonder who came up with the 'clicker' which most recurve archers use? Hate it or love it, it changed many archers ability to be consistent in their shooting. This is the man who invented it and developed the technique that many archers use today:



Fred Leder

Below is an article by Jim Leder about his father and the clicker.

His name is Fred Leder and I should know, he was my Father. If you are interested in how he came up with the idea, read on.

In 1955 my family (Mom & Dad, sister Janet, brother Terry and me) were on vacation in Ludington, Michigan. We were camped at Ludington State Park on beautiful Hamlin Lake. It just so happened that the NFAA was holding the National Field Tournament in the park. Dad was an old gun hunter and target shooter and after watching the archers compete, he decided it would be a good sport for the entire family to participate in. So, back at home in Cincinnati we all got our first 'bows and arrows' along with instructions about archery from a local archery club.

In 1957, we had progressed well, and we all were regularly competing in almost weekly weekend competitions. However, my Dad was the first to notice that along with our increasing skill, problems started to develop. 'Flinching, freezing, and creeping' are problems many archers shooting 'freestyle' need to learn to cope with. All of us had developed these problems.

My Dad was the worst of the lot. Since he was an old rifle target shooter, he was well aware of the first two, flinching and freezing on the goal. He decided that there had to be a way to help fix these problems. He spent many hours in our basement shooting range (about 25 feet across the basement into a target on 2 bales of straw. He had to sit in a chair to keep from hitting the overhead floor rafters) working with alternative 'triggering' tools. His idea was to get away from using the eye as a triggering mechanism and instead use the ear as an audio trigger.

His first attempts were to use a clicking camera timer. He taped it to the bow, wound it to maybe 7 seconds, aimed and was able to hold the sight on goal until the camera 'clicker' stopped, then released the arrow. However, this didn't work all that well, since he found that he would still let down (creep) and the sound could be distracting to other archers. Also, there was no perceived penalty for releasing early. In other words, you could still just ignore it.

Dad was a machine tool maker at the old Cincinnati Milling Machine Company, and because he had spent many years around the edge of mechanical engineering, he quickly figured out that a small piece of spring steel screwed to the bow riser that would go over the end of the arrow and 'click' out of the way with slight pressure might just solve all of the above problems. His first 'clickers' were made from Walgreen's wind up clock springs. He bought them new, took them apart and removed the springs.

Then he would cut them to about 3 inches, drill two small holes in the end and screwed them straight to the bow riser in such a position that he was comfortable with where it clicked. In the winter of 1957-1958 he experimented and practiced with it in our basement 'archery range' and in the spring was competing with the best in the area. The 'clicker' was on it's way.

Soon after, we all had them afixed to our bows, and the results were quite dramatic. Our scores went from just another archer in the field, to winning many events, local, state and national. I perhaps had the best luck as an archer, winning several 'Nationals' both in target and field as a teenager.

A National field tournament in Crystal Springs, Arkansas in 1961 is where the 'clicker' really was noticed. As a 16 year old, shooting in the Intermediate division, my scores were almost on par with the Senior men's division. At the 'exhibition' after the tournament, a lot of people saw the 'clicker' in use, and saw what it could help them accomplish. It really took off after that, and that little piece of spring steel started showing up on a lot of bows.

Shortly afterwards Earl Hoyt of Hoyt Archery asked my Father if he had a patent on the 'clicker'. Dad said no and Earl was kind enough to ask if Dad cared if Hoyt Archery started selling them. Dad said no. I think Hoyt Archery was the first commercial vendor of the 'clicker' with one attached to a small bit of leather that had an adhesive backside.

I used to go watch the archers compete in Oxford at Miami University in Ohio when they had the National target tourney there, and saw it was hard to find an archer without the 'clicker'. I also watched archery in the Olympics on TV and saw the same thing. It's kind of neat to realize my Father was responsible for this 'useful or hated' device. But, after seeing all the archers using it, I feel it is more useful than hated!



You bet there was a 'clicker' on that bow!