

From Danny Lombardo, Bergen Bowmen Secretary

I have been reading many negative internet posts about a few of our members over the last year and a half. Mostly the one person written about is my friend Joel Riotto. Posts filled with inaccurate hearsay and assumed actions with embellished untruths. Without mentioning the names of any authors, I would like to comment on this.

Let me use this forum set the record straight. I am no youngster. I was bow hunting before compound bows were made. So was Joel. At that time, A mechanical release was a piece of wood with a 1/2 inch wide strap on it you put around your bowstring and held it with your thumb. When I met Joel in 1980 he was president of the Bergen Bowmen archery club. I became a member that year. Joel stood president 7 years after that. The club was run well. We had venison dinners and shoots and meetings all run like clockwork.

The toughest thing we had to do was shoot a tight group. We shot at the police range in Maywood, we shot at the middle school in Hackensack on Friday nights, and we shot at shoots as a club at places like Lincoln Park archers Bow Hunter roundup in August/September. Joel arranged traveling to other shoots in a caravan of our vehicles all meeting under the ugly mural (now gone) at the Bergen plaza, all of us wearing our golden Bergen Bowmen shirts.

After a while all the clubs in the tri state area knew the Bergen Bowmen. We were a tight group of shooters, all wearing our gold Bergen bowmen shirts. We had a blast! Our common denominator was the range in Mahwah. We all shot there, as individuals and as a club. We had work party's there, we held public shoots there, and everything was run like a fine tuned machine thanks to Joel. As president he set up committees for everything you could think of. He set the president, he designed the outline for the future club leaders to follow. When the animal rights people attacked bow hunting with legislation Joel set up a rapid response system where everyone got a list of 5 names to call in their area code and those 5 people would call 5 people and so on, to advise about another anti-hunting bill. That's how we contacted each other before e mails.

Everything was going fine then came RT. 287. Right through our range!!! If not for the know-how and efforts of Joel Riotto and other dedicated sportsmen like Lou Martinez, William Schaper and others, archery would have disappeared from the face of Bergen County. Joel's knowledge of the real estate industry, his selfless devotion to the sport of archery, his countless hours spent researching real estate records and court appearances on behalf of the archers of Bergen county, we all might not have a range at all! I'm not repeating what i heard, this is first hand, I was there for it all.

Now that our club has almost been destroyed by a couple of people, we are rebuilding. Our treasury was down to zero. Men like Joel, Dave Butler, Jim Ryan, Rob De Stefano, myself and others donated hundreds of dollars to the treasury to get it back off the ground again. At this point Joel has made up flyers and notices addressed them and mailed them out to members notifying them of events and minutes of meetings, all at his own personal expense. What have you done for the sport? Today? Last month? Last year?

I have been a continual member on the Bergen Bowmen for 37 years. I have met many close friends in those 37 years. Joel happens to be only one of the many. Posters have almost destroyed this 65 year old club. Thanks to the efforts of its members like Jack, Dwayne, Kathy, Joel and the core membership, were all still wearing our Golden Bergen Bowmen shirts. If you're going to trash someone you should at least know a little about the person so when someone reads your post, you don't look ignorant.