

The Vegas Shoot

Welcomes

Janice Walth, VIA

(visually impaired archer)

AN INTERVIEW BY
PAUL DAVISON

It's an exciting time for Janice Walth. The 2005 Vegas Shoot was her first archery tournament outside the state of California. Afflicted with the hereditary degenerative disease retinitis pigmentosa since birth, Janice has overcome the "you just can't do that" stigma often (and improperly) associated with the visually impaired.

Janice got interested in archery a few years ago when she started accompanying husband Courtney to his Sacramento Archery Club shoots. ["... but I can do that!"] She then started searching the Internet for help and ideas. There wasn't anything available in the US, but she found an organization in Europe solely dedicated to sports for the visually impaired: British Blind Sport. The BBS Archery Committee has its own website: www.bbsarchery.co.nr. This is where Janice found all the information needed to get started, principally in the design and construction of a "tactile" (based on touch, not sight)

aiming device. The materials needed for the device are not unusual or hard to find; e.g., a tripod, an adjustable (but rugged) bowsight, a simple laser pointer (for aligning the tripod), some wood and metal pieces, and lots of duct tape.

Janice aims at the target by touching the back of her bowhand to the tactile device (a soft probe) mounted on the bowsight (Photo 1). The bowsight is mounted to the tripod, and the tripod is rigidly anchored to the ground or floor, either with pegs, sandbags, or, as at Vegas, duct tape. Janice therefore adjusts her "sight" by moving the tactile probe just as a sighted person moves a bowsight (Photo 2). The VI archer therefore has two anchors: one rear where the draw fingers touch the face, and one forward where the bowhand touches the adjustable tactile device (Photo 3). Fixed-position foot markers are equally important. For her Vegas set-up, Courtney has built Janice a simple wooden jig, taped to the floor, with two spring clamps marking her exact foot positions (Photo 4).

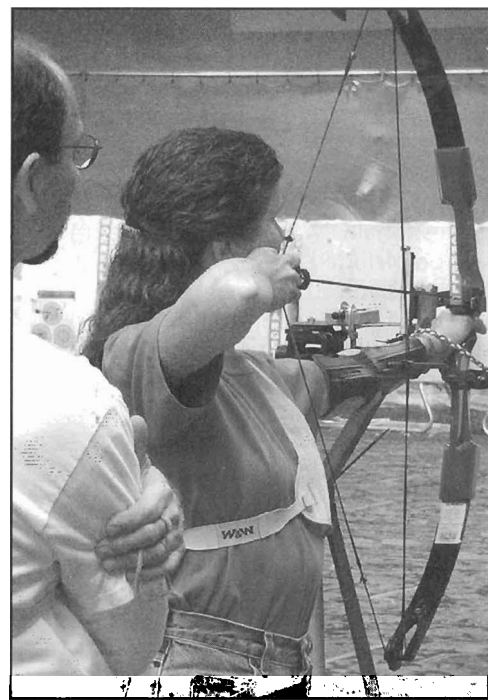
Courtney has been an archer for about seven years, and he, along with fellow Sacramento Archery Club members, instructed Janice on the fine art of shooting the bow and arrow. Although Courtney shoots a recurve, Janice prefers a compound bow with its modest draw weight, thereby being more relaxed at full draw.

Once she learned the basics, Janice began shooting in outdoor target events. Initially, she entered as a guest, with no chance for an award. Obviously, Janice could not compete with sighted archers. Then in May, 2004 the State Archers of California recognized blind archery as an official style at all their events. She can now enter "real" archery tournaments without being labeled as a "special guest." She pays the full entry fees and can earn "real" medals.

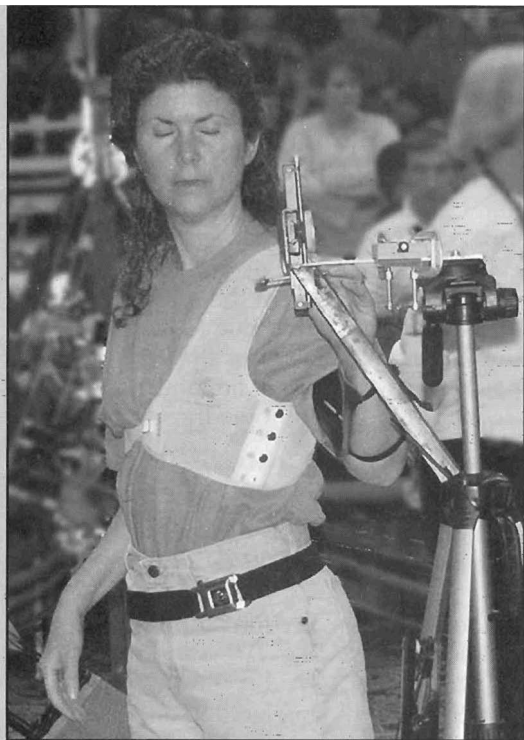
A week and a half before the Vegas Shoot, all of Janice's archery equipment was stolen. Not only did she need a new bow, but Courtney had to build an entirely new tactile sighting stand. Because of the unfamiliar bow, Janice didn't shoot as well as hoped at Vegas. If not already on hand, Janice will get another new bow soon.

Janice Walth has no interest in shooting in "blind-only" events. Although shooting in a roving archery game, like an NFAA Field Round, is no doubt impractical, Janice is very confident that she can mainstream in any indoor or outdoor target tournament. After watching her at the Vegas Shoot, you bet she can!

For more on Janice Walth, read her article in *Archery Focus*, Volume 8, Number 6, 2004.

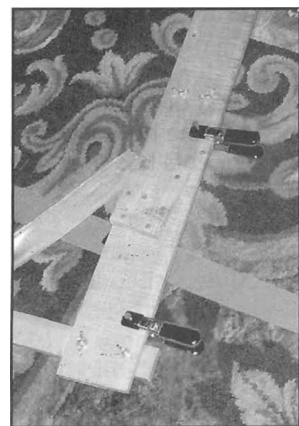
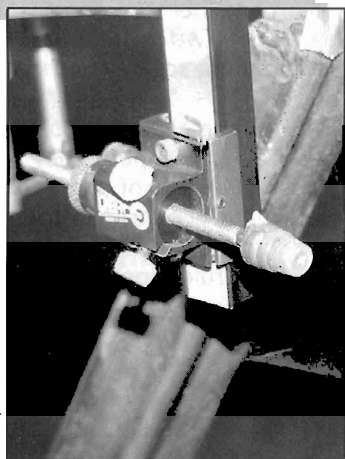


Courtney Walth checks Janice's alignment



Janice adjusts her sight between ends

Janice's
tactile
aiming
device



Foot markers straddle the shooting line