

Nostalgia Corner

30 Years Ago ... by Paul Davison

Rollie Mantzke and the Great Outdoor Nationals at Auroraland



Based on a job well done by the host Auroraland Archers at the 1970 Nationals, and by its central USA location just west of Chicago, the return to Aurora in 1973 was eagerly anticipated. This was the second of six Nationals Auroraland would host from 1970 through 1984. The club had exceptional support not only from its members, but from the entire community, including governments, businesses, and merchants of Kane County and nearby towns of North Aurora, Batavia, and Geneva. The ranges were located on two sites along the scenic Fox River on land managed by the Park District. The Holiday Inn host motel was essentially taken over by the NFAA staff, the shooters and their families. There was even an 80-yard practice range behind the motel. Practice ranges were also set up at the campgrounds on Auroraland's home range.

One did not come to Aurora for just the five, 28-target rounds. There was something to do for everybody — the pre-tournament 3-D animal shoot, the four days of planned tours for the non-shooters, and the five NFAA Instructors School sessions held each evening.

The success of the Aurora Nationals, however, was really the result of outstanding tournament preparation. Based on lessons learned during the 1970 Nationals, Tournament Chairman Rollie Mantzke left nothing to chance. Virtually every host-responsible item was superbly covered — range layout and safety, target butts and faces, traffic control, public health (standby EMS), sanitation facilities, food services, press releases, etc. Although

Rollie lived in Aurora, his home during tournament was a RV located in the middle of the main range complex. He was strictly a hands-on manager, but he also had enough savvy to know that he couldn't do it all by himself. Hard-nosed range captains were assigned to each 28-target range. These radio-equipped captains roamed the ranges in ATV's ... making sure that there were no problems with backups, bad target butts, water shortages, etc.

Rollie Mantzke, tournament director extraordinaire, managed the first five Aurora Outdoor Nationals. The attendance at the 1976 Nationals was a whopping 1266! — still the second highest ever in the 57 year history of Outdoor Nationals. Rollie's expertise was so well recognized that NFAA President Jim Shubert named him National Tournament Chairman for the 1979 Detroit Lakes (MN) Outdoor Nationals. Rollie's last Aurora tournament was in 1981. He refused to allow his heart problems slow him down. He died from a heart attack while bowhunting in late 1982. You can bet, however, that he's still running that big tournament in the sky.



Rollie Mantzke putting finishing touches on pre-tournament 3-D target for 1973 Aurora Outdoor Nationals.