

# A T Cover Story

## Competitive Archery Expert

As I pulled into the parking lot of Lancaster Archery Supply, I could not help but be impressed by the unique setting. A worldwide archery distributor, with one of the largest pro shops in the country, is housed in a modern facility with a hitching rail on one side of the parking lot. No, I had not stepped back in time but was in the center of Pennsylvania's Amish country.

A short time later, Rob Kaufhold, the founder and owner of Lancaster Archery Supply, was taking me on a guided tour of his operation. I had the feeling that the old saying "neat as a pin" could have originated right here as everything seemed so well organized. As we walked through the office area it was apparent that for most of the employees their interest in archery was not simply job related. Hunting photographs and mounted heads dotted the walls in most offices with a sprinkling of targets with the centers shot out proudly posted in others. I could not help but notice several target bows propped against desks as if the owner wanted to be ready just in case someone announced "step up to the shoot-

ing line" over the loudspeaker. As I overheard a customer service "Techxpert" speaking with a customer on the other end of the phone, it sounded like a conversation between two friends with one trying to help the other make exactly the right decision. This team of "Techxperts" handles approximately 500 calls on a busy day in addition to the faxed and e-mailed orders coming through.

Lancaster Archery's "Techxperts" are just as the name implies; Technical Experts in every aspect of archery, this customer service staff does not just "take" orders, they ask questions and confirm dealer and customer selections to give them more confidence in what is

being ordered. They check compatibility of components, for example insuring correct nock, proper point, etc. with a particular arrow shaft model. They also make recommendations for dealers who have someone in the Junior Olympic Development Program, (JOAD), or who have an Olympic hopeful walk in and need a bow, arrows or other target archery equipment that the dealer isn't used to working with on a regular basis. Lancaster Archery Supply also guarantees the "Techxperts" recommendation when it comes to proper arrow size and compatibility; something no other distributor does. It was clear to me that customer satisfaction was more than just a



*The main building in the Lancaster Archery Complex, shown here, houses the retail and distributor portions of the business.*



*Billboards such as this one dot the countryside in Lancaster and the surrounding counties. Lancaster Archery Supply customers come to visit from all over the country as well as overseas.*



*Lancaster Archery Supply is located in the heart of Pennsylvania's beautiful Dutch Country where horse and buggies and hitching post are common sights because of the Amish population.*



By John Kasun

# Grows As Retailer, Distributor

saying at Lancaster Archery Supply.

An extension of Lancaster Archery Supply is CR Archery Products. CR, which stands for Carole, (Robs wife), and Rob, manufactures braided bow slings, Apex scopes, finger slings, a stabilizer



*Lancaster Archery is known for its ability to service all phases of archery interest including casual recreational shooting, hunting, amateur and professional competitors as well as Olympic champions and hopefuls alike.*



*Several times during the author's visit at Lancaster Archery Supply Rob took time out to chat with a customer. In this case he is getting some positive feedback from a satisfied customer who is telling him how well the bow he recently purchased is working.*



*The retail showroom is well lit, neat, clean as a pin and merchandise is tastefully displayed. Equipment and accessories are all grouped accordingly with each section clearly identified for customer friendly self service.*

quick-disconnect and binocular products for target archers. CR is housed in a separate building on the property adjacent to the main facility. As we exited the manufacturing area Rob turned up a stone walk to a beautifully restored home originally built in 1840. "This is my morning commute," he explained. "I can go for days without ever getting in a car. It's great because with Carole and me both working in the business we are only a few steps from the house so we can pop home anytime."

Carole and Rob have been married five years and have two children, Conner who is almost four and Casey who is one year old. As I stepped into the family room I found myself surrounded by mounted trophies on the wall and kids toys on the floor. "Conner," said Rob, "let's hear your elk call." Young Conner reached for an elk call hanging on the door knob and with a skill

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**Carole Kaufhold is Lancaster Archery's Vice President and CFO. She has an MBA in finance and accounting and Rob says she does a great job of keeping his feet on the ground when he has new business ideas.**

beyond his years gave a bugle that was as good as many others I have heard. "I am trying to get him started early," Kaufhold laughed.

Like his son Conner, Rob Kaufhold's exposure to archery and business also



**Rob, Carole and their two children, Conner and Casey live in this beautifully restored home, originally built in 1840, which is located just a short stroll from the complex that houses Lancaster Archery Supply.**

started at an early age. His father, Bob Kaufhold, was a noted Pennsylvania target archer and bowhunter during the 1950's, 60's and 70's. Kaufhold Sr. was a skilled tool and die maker who owned and operated a successful machine

shop business. When the compound bow exploded on the archery scene in the early 70's the bow itself and the accessory equipment available were primitive by today's standards. Combining his machine shop knowl-



**Gordie Moore, a long time Lancaster Archery employee, takes some time to help this youngster get his bow properly adjusted. No matter how busy staff members are there is always time for the youngsters at Lancaster Archery.**



**Ladies and youth bows are always on hand to suit that special customer. Note how the displays are clearly identified for customer convenience. The tags on the front of each bow identifies all the critical data for the bow such as manufacturer, draw weight and length plus bow length, percentage of let-off and price. The more information that is available on the tag the easier it is for the customer to narrow his selection before requiring assistance.**



***Each year Lancaster Archery Supply hosts the Lancaster Indoor Classic at its shooting center. This year in spite of the terrible weather on the weekend of the shoot it had 150 shooters who shared over \$35,000 in prize money and door prizes. Mathews and Hoyt also provided contingency bonus money of \$3,000, \$2,000 or \$1,000 respectively for any people placing first, second or third who were shooting one of those brands.***

edge with his love for archery Kaufhold Sr. saw the need for better accessories and developed the first double slotted hunting sight. Using his machine shop facilities he was soon manufacturing and marketing hunting sights, arrow straighteners, stabilizers and numerous other archery accessories under the name of Full Adjust Archery Products.

The exposure to his fathers' entrepreneurial spirit, hard work ethics, business sense and his love for archery helped shape Rob Kaufhold's future at a very early age. "My brother, Alan, and I both worked in our father's machine shop as soon as we were old enough to sweep the floor," Kaufhold explained. "As we grew up we moved material, cleaned the machines, packed products and finally operated the machinery. While I was drilling holes in archery sights to me they were just holes. I remember when a skid of material was put in front of my machine I was determined to get all the pieces drilled so I would be done but as soon as I finished one skid another one appeared and soon another truckload of skids was at the door. I spent most of my spare time as well as my summer vacations working in the machine shop. I quickly decided that I wanted to make a living doing something that I really enjoyed and I wanted to get as far away from the machine shop as possible. My father had exposed me to archery when I was

barely old enough to walk and archery had always been a big part of my life. I had a strong feeling from those early days in the machine shop that somehow archery would play a major role in my future."

K a u f h o l d was active in archery competition throughout his teens and won the National Archery Association's National Intermediate Archery Championship in 1979 while a senior in high school. That win earned him the ranking of the number one high school archer in the country. It was only the first of many titles and honors that he would claim both in the US and international competition over the next 12 years. As a result of his skill and accom-

plishments he was offered several college archery scholarships. He selected James Madison University located in Harrisonburg, Virginia because it had both a strong inter-collegiate archery program and an excellent business school.

"While most of the students in my classes were learning the business ropes just as I was few really knew where their roads would lead," Kaufhold smiled. "But in my case I was constantly focused on the archery industry and all of my classroom business models were based on my real life desire to make a living in archery. Two days after my graduation from James Madison, in 1983, I began remodeling a building that would house my first archery shop. The building was relatively small; about 1,000 square feet of showroom space with a little room behind for storage and service. Upstairs in the attic I put in four shooting lanes. To get up and running I had to borrow \$30,000 from the local bank. While some people thought I was taking quite a chance I believe that life is short and you have to do what you

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love and at times that means taking chances.”

“Somehow I made it through the first year and to help out the business during the winter months I organized winter leagues,” Kaufhold continued. “The timing for leagues was perfect and the interest that they generated put me on a solid footing. For the next two years I focused on building the business and growing my customer base. I formed a loose buying group with several other dealers that allowed us to take advantage of quantity discounts that none of us would have qualified for alone. It also allowed us to offer our customers a greater variety of products. It was a great idea but it was not without problems and was soon dissolved. However that experience showed me the potential of developing a full fledged distribution side to my business. The dealers who were customers of my father’s Full Adjust Archery Products line became a natural base for me as I established the distributor side of the business in 1985.”

“Both the pro shop and distribution portion of the business continued to grow during the 80’s and early 90’s” Kaufhold said. “Five years after I established my first store I opened a second in a small town near Philadelphia. This was not a spur of the moment decision; it was part of my original business plan in which I envisioned having a chain of six stores. I did my homework, I checked the demographics and identified what I felt was a great location but two and half years after the store opened I had to cut my losses and sell it. I realized the problem was that I couldn’t be in two places at one time. I had the vision for expanding my locations but I did not have the human resources in place to support that vision. It was 1991 and I knew that I had to dust myself off and head in a new direction.”

“Most archery shops focus entirely on the bowhunting customer,” Kaufhold explained. “Because bowhunting sales are seasonal it is difficult to base a year-

ly business plan on the profits made in just the third quarter. While the answer to an expanded business for many business owners is diversification I decided that I didn’t want to add fishing, guns or paintball. I didn’t want to be a full line sporting goods store; I wanted to be a full line archery store. If you shot an arrow I wanted you to be my friend and a customer of my business. However to succeed I knew I needed to focus on every avenue that archery offered. I decided to capitalize on my years of personal involvement in target archery both in this country and abroad. I knew that I had both the knowledge and the contacts to successfully develop the target and 3-D archery side of the business. I also believe that to be successful every business has to grow its own customers and I felt the more people I could get involved in archery the more potential customers I would have.”

“No one business is ever going to be able to have the whole pie to itself,” Kaufhold said philosophically. “We all have to be satisfied with just a piece, however the bigger the pie the bigger everyone’s piece becomes. I wanted to make a bigger archery pie and the best way to do that was to bring more people into the sport. With the hunting population aging and the future of hunting itself facing changes with decreasing available lands and public perception I want to do all I can to make archery a recreational sport that continually attracts more people.”

“As a business Lancaster Archery Supply supports all the major archery tournaments,” said Kaufhold. “When we started I would simply show up with some items in the trunk of my car. Later we rented booth space on the tournament grounds and today we have two fully equipped event trailers that travel to the site of major shoots and sports shows. The trailers offer the shooters the ability to see the latest equipment and to purchase what they need on the spot, keeping our name before the tar-

get archer and the public. Each year we hold the Lancaster Indoor Classic in our shooting center. This year in spite of the terrible weather on the weekend of the shoot we still had 150 shooters who shared over \$35,000 in prize money and door prizes. Mathews and Hoyt also provided contingency bonus money of \$3,000, \$2,000 or \$1,000 respectively for



**Craig Rowe of the receiving department inputs the latest merchandised received into the computer system. To ensure the most accurate inventory control all merchandise is tracked via computer from receiving to the retail showroom or the distribution center and to shipment to a customer or a retail sale.**



**Steve Yoder, in purchasing, is responsible for keeping the shelves well stocked with the latest products. Steve, like many of Lancaster’s employees, does double duty by also being technically knowledgeable and able to not only serve the customer but provide him or her technical assistance as well.**

any winners placing first, second or third who were shooting one of their bows."

"Aside from supporting the tournaments we also conduct workshops and provide technical assistance for shooters," Kaufhold continued. "Larry Wise, who is well known as a tournament shooter, author and coach, recently con-



***Nat Gilchrist, General Manager for Lancaster Archery Supply, joined the firm three years ago. "He came to us with 37 successful years in management with a printing company. His knowledge and experience have greatly contributed to our company's success," Kaufhold said.***



***Eric Eschbach is Lancaster Archery Supply's inventory control specialist. Coming from outside the industry Eric has the advantage of looking at the business from "outside the box" which allows him to look at established systems with a new perspective. In the short time he has been with the company he has been able to generate substantial savings with this fresh approach.***

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ducted his Core Archery School at our Lancaster Archery Shooting Center. In addition to archery workshops and seminars, we also do equipment analysis using our high speed photography capabilities. We use our facility to help both archers and dealers learn how to set up and use their equipment at its peak performance."

"Lancaster Archery Supply does not only focus on shooters who are already actively involved in the sport." Kaufhold said, "We partner with anyone with an interest in archery including scouts, schools, church groups, clubs and we support the JOAD program. If anyone is attempting to promote archery, we support them in any way we can including the loaning of equipment. In-house we give lessons to beginners and advanced

shooters alike. We especially like to work with the kids and every Saturday you will find a part of our range filled with youngsters learning how to shoot a bow. When working with kids we have two rules, safety and fun. We do not stress the competitive side of the sport but instead make sure everyone enjoys themselves while learning what we feel is a life-long sport. We even host children's birthday parties where the theme of the party is shooting a bow and arrow. We are constantly trying to expose people to the sport who would not normally think of archery as something that they would be interested in. But I must admit that it is just as much fun for instructors and me as it is for the kids. Nothing makes my heart beat faster than to hear a kid scream with

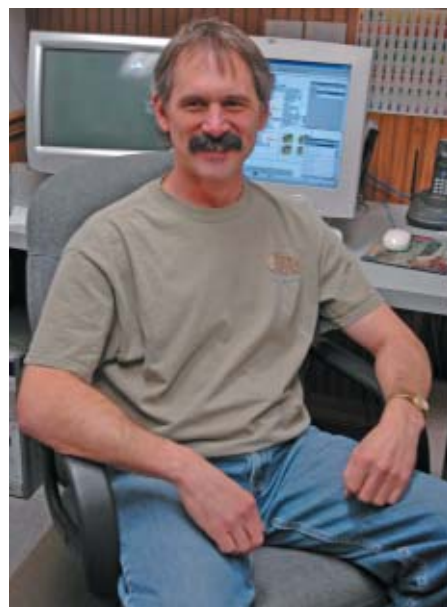
laughter after he or she pops a big balloon for the first time."

"I believe that if you share your passion it will come back to you. You reap what you sow in both life and in business," Kaufhold continued. "You can't just wait for the customer to come through your door, you need to be



**ABOVE:** Kids receive special attention at Lancaster Archery. Each Saturday finds the range filled with potential future champions. The emphasis is always on safety and fun. Even if these young shooters never hunt they may just develop a lifelong interest in archery which is good for both them and the future of the archery industry.

**AT RIGHT:** Denise Raum, a Lancaster Archery Supply employee and a member of Mathews Pro Staff, is the Pennsylvania State Coordinator for the National Archery in the Schools Program, (NASP). Denise is an accomplished archer and qualified instructor with great organizational skills. Under her direction she had 21 schools signed up in the program with 40 on the waiting list after just a few months as state coordinator. Lancaster Archery donates her time.



**Smiling Al Richard is a long time employee who joined Lancaster Archery in the early 1980's. Al handles marketing and advertising as well as catalog and web design.**



proactive. With every bow we sell we give the customer written directions to his nearest club or shooting range. We encourage people to get involved in recreational shooting and we tell them where they can find range facilities. We help promote the clubs and ranges surrounding us and they in turn send us new business. It's a win-win situation."

Following that vision Lancaster Archery Supply has grown from a modest beginning to a complex of buildings today that encompasses over 35,000 sq. ft. containing an inventory worth \$1.6 million. The business has a customer base of 70,000 comprised of both dealers and consumers who can order by phone, catalog or from the web site. The business is broken down by 20 percent retail and 80 percent wholesale and is a major distributor for eleven foreign countries with Olympic archery teams. As of January 1, 2005 it became the sole importer for Shibuya USA, a manufac-

turer of high quality target sights and accessories made in Japan.

There are 25 full time employees on the payroll and another 20 part timers depending upon the season. Over the past eight years Lancaster Archery Supply has enjoyed an average annual growth rate of 20 percent per year with the highest year during that period generating growth figures of 34 percent.

As one customer said, "Stepping into Lancaster Archery's showroom is like stepping into a Toy's "R" Us for grown-ups." The massive showroom is customer friendly. Big game mounts are displayed along the well-lit walls and equipment displays. Each section is labeled for quick product identification and at a glance it is easy to know exactly where to go for the items in which you are interested. For the customer that knows exactly what he wants he can simply pick it up and head for the cash register. While there is knowledge-

able sales staff on hand at all times for any customers requiring assistance there is also a "take a number" system which helps to act as traffic control during the busiest times.

Two rows of hunting bows are displayed along one wall. The top row holds 150 bows while the bottom row contains 100 ready to go bow packages. "We have found that the faster we can get a customer shooting his new bow and hitting the target the quicker the sale," Kaufhold explained. "When the shop is slow we put together a series of packages in all price ranges, complete with the accessories mounted and adjusted. This is a great time saver when we get busy

because we can simply pick up a package in which the customer is interested and take him directly to our range which is adjacent to the show room. With the bow and sight already adjusted and a few simple shooting tips we can have the customer hitting the target quickly. When this happens the customer is in love with the bow and gives the credit to Lancaster Archery Supply, the sale is complete and we can move onto the next customer. Unless a customer knows exactly what he wants they normally ask our opinion on what we might suggest. By putting packages of our recommendations together ahead of time we save time and money for the customer and ourselves."

Lancaster Archery Supply offers Mathews, Hoyt, Martin Pro Series, BowTech and Parker in their retail showroom and offers PSE, Darton, Reflex, Martin Gold Series and Fred Bear plus a wide selection of top-of-the line recurve bows to dealers through their distribution center. Kaufhold says Lancaster Archery Supply was the world's largest Mathews dealer in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and second in 2003. In 2003 and 2004 he said they have been the world's largest Hoyt dealer.

"Keeping momentum moving in any business is very important as it allows you to take risk and allow for failures. Although we clearly have had substantial growth we have also had a few failures such as our recent experiment with a dealer trailer," Kaufhold said striking his forehead. "I equipped a full-size trailer as a portable showroom for dealers. It was my idea to pull the trailer right up to the dealers' doors and act as a portable rep complete with product assisting the dealer as required. It was a great idea but the logistics were a killer. Reaching many of the rural dealers was much more difficult than I had envisioned. We put the trailer on the road in December of 2003 and pulled it off the road six months later. I chalked it up to a learning experience."

"I am a born salesman and I never saw a problem that couldn't be solved with a 20 or 30 percent increase in sales," Kaufhold admitted. "However I have learned that you need an infrastructure to support those increased sales. My internal focus for the past six months has been on stabilizing our



**Tina Funk operates the automatic fletchers in the arrow department and provides both completed "ready to buy arrows" as well as custom orders.**

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base of operations so we can continue our momentum with a minimum of stress. In any business there has to be a balance between dropping the balls and keeping all the balls in the air without going crazy. This means finding ways of doing every job easier and more efficiently."

"A perfect example of this is when I recently hired Eric Eschbach, as an inventory control specialist," Rob said. "On his fifth day with us Eric noticed the high rates we were paying for shipping insurance. He discovered we were buying our insurance from the carrier as opposed to using a private insurer. After a little more investigation he put new shipping insurance policies into place and our projected savings from that one change will be between \$120,000 and \$150,000 per year. That money goes directly to the bottom line. While we were paying attention to inventory levels we didn't look hard enough at other areas of potential savings. Eric on the other hand is like a dog with a bone, he identifies a problem and won't let go until it is solved."

"We are very fortunate to have a great set of employees at Lancaster Archery Supply," Kaufhold said proudly. "Nat Gilchrist, our general manager, joined us three years ago. He came to us after 37 successful years in management with a printing company and was looking for a second career. His knowledge and experience have greatly contributed to our company's success. While Nat and Eric are relatively new employees we also have some old-timers on board. Gordon Moore, who works in retail sales and Al Richard, who handles marketing and advertising as well as catalog and web design have both been with me since the early 80's. Steve Yoder, in purchasing has done a terrific job at keeping our shelves stocked while remaining one of our most technically knowledgeable

staff members. Our warehouse team is dedicated, effective, and energetic and they do everything possible to ensure customer satisfaction as they handle the filling and shipment of between 200 to 300 packages per day with an average of 1,000 to 1,400 per week. Of course I can't forget my most valuable employee, my wife Carole. Carole is our Vice President and CFO. She has an MBA in finance and accounting and does a great job of keeping my feet on the ground."

"Our attempts to continue to grow the target side of our business took an

board the National Archery in the Schools Program had scheduled a meeting with a number of interested organizations concerning the possibility of establishing archery programs within the Pennsylvania school system. While everyone in attendance saw the benefit to both the students and the sport no one was in a position to make a leadership commitment. Not being one to let an opportunity go by Denise and I decided to volunteer our services."

"When Denise was appointed the official Pennsylvania State Coordinator for the program I assumed that it might take 25 to 30 percent of her time," Kaufhold laughed. "Boy was I wrong. We have only been involved in the project for a couple of months and already it is consuming approximately 80 percent of her time and I see us heading to 100 percent shortly, but the results have been tremendous. Within three months of starting the program she had 21 schools signed up and another 40 on the waiting list. While Lancaster Archery Supply may see some direct results of our efforts the important thing is that the sport and the industry as a whole will benefit

by having more people exposed to archery and in that regard the pie gets bigger for everyone. It is important to remember that target archery feeds the bowhunting side and even if these new shooters never bowhunt, if they simply continue to shoot for pleasure it is still a tremendous boost for the industry. Denise is presently working on a directory that would list ranges, shops, clubs and certified instructors across the state. Not only will these new shooters be exposed to archery but they will have important information on where to use their new skills and where to buy equipment."

The success of Kaufhold's philosophy of growing the archery pie through



**CR Archery Products, an extension of Lancaster Archery, produces an assortment of accessory archery products including high quality scopes, braided slings, Bino Straps and finger slings.**

interesting turn recently in the form of Denise Raum," Kaufhold continued. "Denise is on the Mathews pro staff and the Pennsylvania Governor's Advisory Council on Hunting, Fishing and Conservation. She is a level two instructor with the National Archery Association, a level three instructor with the National Field Archery Association, an instructor with the National Bowhunters Education Foundation and she also instructs archery in the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program. Denise was looking to rejoin the workforce after her children started back to school and was going to join our team at Lancaster Archery Supply. Just about the time she was coming on

exposing people to the recreational side of the archery is directly reflected in his business. While 75 percent of Lancaster Archery Supply's retail business is bowhunting related the remaining 25 percent is generated by target archery sales.

As I was writing this piece I thought back to my own experience as a shop owner during the 70's and 80's. My wife and I were bowhunters, but we were also heavily involved in both field and target archery and our shop reflected all of those interests. While we sold a lot of bowhunting equipment we also sold a great deal of target equipment, both recurve and compound models as well as all of the target related accessories. The interest in recreational target shooting was reflected in the fact that there were several active archery clubs within easy driving distance and shoots were held on a regular schedule. By providing the equipment and the knowledge our shop helped feed the clubs and the clubs in turn provided our shop with a steady stream of new customers.

When I sold my business in the mid

80's the new owner was not interested in target archery and focused strictly on the hunting side. With no one to fill in the target void, interest soon began to decline and several of the clubs folded. Just as creating shooting opportunities and generating interest in target shooting attracts people to archery the lack of those efforts can result in lost business.

"Although we draw our retail customers from a large radius our first responsibility is to our dealers," Kaufhold stressed. "We never match discounted retail prices and always try to influence the profit margin for our dealers in an upward direction by setting the example of holding the price line. Everyone in the food chain must make a living. The healthier any single archery business is the healthier we all become. I strongly believe that the promotion of target and recreational shooting offers every dealer an excellent opportunity to increase their sales and to grow their customer base while planting the potential for future sales. How that is done and to what degree is up to each individual dealer to decide but in my

case I know it works and the growth of my business proves it."

As I finished my interview, Kaufhold stood up and looked out the window. Pointing to a building located about three farms away he said, "That's where I went to high school." Turning to look out a window on the other wall he pointed to his home located just across the lawn and laughed as he continued, "And that's where I live now. I guess you could say that I never got very far in life." It was the first thing that he said during our time together that I had to disagree with.

**Editor's Note:** In addition to his writing duties, John Kasun is an outdoor seminar speaker and a business consultant with experience in corporations large and small. He can be reached at 126 Hickory Ln, Ducansville, PA 16635, by phone at (814) 695-5784 or by email at [kasun@asdc.com](mailto:kasun@asdc.com) ←