

## **Archer Ferguson and Imperial Schrade join forces**

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Imperial Schrade is one of America's oldest and best-known brands of traditional outdoor cutlery. Byron Ferguson is America's most famous traditional archer.

Recently, the Kingsport-based knife company signed Ferguson to serve as Imperial Schrade celebrity spokesperson and pro-staff advisor.

The amazingly accurate archer from Alabama has already been promoting Schrade products at several public appearances this year. But there is one command performance Ferguson has been particularly eager to make.

Thanks to his new sponsor, it's going to happen this April.

Ferguson was requested to give a special trick-shot exhibition for veterans hospitalized at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Imperial Schrade has agreed to fund Ferguson's exhibition and will also provide 150 Schrade knives that will be freely distributed to the attending veterans.

"To be associated with someone that is such a well-known expert in the outdoor field and to be able to do something for our troops at the same time ... this is something our company really wants to do," said Stewart Taylor, president and CEO of Taylor Brands LLC, which acquired Imperial Schrade in 2004.

Ferguson, whose trademark trick shots appear weekly on Outdoor Life Network's "Shooting USA," is no stranger to making personal appearances at charity events. But this one will be a little different.

"This is going to be more up close and personal. The people you're trying to help are right there," said Ferguson, who plans to visit any room-bound vets who are unable to attend the exhibition. "I'm just going to try to put a smile on their faces."

Taylor Brands has its worldwide distribution center in Kingsport. The grand old brand, established in 1904, was chosen to complement the company's existing lines.

Prior to the acquisition, Smith & Wesson Cutlery products have been among Taylor Brands' most popular and visible items. Many of these products - including S.W.A.T., Extreme Ops, Homeland Security, Search & Rescue and H.R.T. - have gained favor with law enforcement, rescue and military personnel. Many of these knives and tools also appeal to hikers, paddlers and outdoor extreme sports enthusiasts.

In contrast to the high-tech, 21st century industrial style flouted by S&W and other Taylor Brands lines, most Imperial Schrade knives - including Old Timer and Uncle Henry - appeal directly to the utilitarian and aesthetic sensibilities of a 20th century outdoor enthusiast.

Stewart noted that many younger knife buyers are increasingly enamored of stainless steel blades, black synthetic and colored alloy handle materials and single-bladed folders with slick, one-handed opening mechanisms. But there remains a strong market for traditional knife designs, particularly among experienced hunters, anglers and farmers.

"While a carbon-steel blade will darken with use, a lot of people who use knives as tools on an everyday basis still prefer carbon steel to stainless because of the way it quickly takes an edge," Taylor said.

As fate would have it, Ferguson - who hunts a wide variety of small, medium and large game with his traditional longbow - has long been a fan of Schrade products.

"I've had an Old Timer Sharp Finger in my quiver for years. I've used it for quail, pheasant, rabbits and everything on up to moose," he said. "You can't beat a Sharp Finger for large game."

In addition to being a traditional archer, Ferguson is very much a traveling outdoor showman in the traditional mold. Following an appearance at the Illinois Deer & Turkey Classic in Bloomington, he's set for a trick shot exhibition at the Minnesota Deer & Turkey Expo in Owatonna.

The man Apache Indians ceremonially named "Tdo-ee-cee-e" (The One That Doesn't Miss) had an iconic national appearance on NBC's "Tonight Show" shortly following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Host Jay Leno tossed a small target into the air bearing the likeness of Osama bin Laden - and Ferguson nailed it between the eyes.

As a youth, Ferguson idolized and later emulated celebrity archer Howard Hill, who was a brilliant showman as well as a bowhunting pioneer.

Ferguson will soon get the opportunity to defend his hero's honor in "The Greatest Shots in History," a program being produced by The History Channel.

What Ferguson will attempt to replicate is known as "The Robin Hood Shot" - splitting an arrow lodged in a target by a following arrow. This particular trick shot was reportedly executed by Hill for the cameras during the 1938 filming of "The Adventures of Robin Hood," starring Errol Flynn.

"They didn't have good trick photography when he filmed that shot. He had to make it for it to look the way it did," said Ferguson, the only archer among the various marksmen chosen for the program. "Evidently, the guys on the 'MythBusters' show decided that splitting an arrow is impossible. I think they just don't know how to select an arrow with a straight grain to split."