

# Mark Rentz, Greg Summers, Dan



# Tomorrow's

By Bill and Sherry Krenz, with interviews

To stand out in the archery industry today, you've got to move faster, boldly innovate, promote and deliver. In other words, you've got to make things better for those buying your products.

## Making Archery Better

“Our overriding intent has always been to make archery and archers better,” says Greg Summers, founder and president of Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited, Inc.

“We did that when we introduced our very first T.R.U. Ball releases in 1995, and we've been steering by that principle ever since. Today, we're continuing to push the design of archery releases forward, and we've also just introduced an inventive new target sight that is already turning heads. There are other enhanced products on our drawing



# Ellgass & Margaret Summers

## Resources Unlimited, Inc.

by Tracey Reginek

boards. We work very hard to provide the sort of quality, innovative products that allow archers to shoot better.”

For Greg Summers, such a commitment to quality, customers and innovation goes back far beyond 1995.

“Not long after I got out of high school,” Greg reveals, “I began working in a machine shop where my father was the supervisor. That may sound to some like an easy task, but it was far from it. To avoid even the appearance of favoritism my father kept time studies on every job I did. I started at the bottom, and I had to produce more parts and less scrap than any other employee in order to move up to the next machine or skill level. Those high expectations caused me to rise to the challenge, and in three short years I worked and earned my way up to the most advanced machines and jobs in the shop.”

**Keys members of the T.R.U. team include (left to right) Nate Adams, Wayne Stanley, Brandon Reyes, Dan Ellgass, Marc Rentz, Scott Markham, Brian Summers, Margaret Summers, Kelly Summers, Greg Summers, Ben Summers, and Randy Summers.**





**Greg and Margaret Summers raised five children, three of whom still work for Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited. Pictured left to right are Margaret, Ben, Greg, Brian and Kelly Summers. Greg and Margaret have devoted their lives to their business and their family. Ben and Brian hold master's degrees in business administration, finishing third and first in their graduating class, while Kelly was valedictorian of her high school class and is a trained graphic designer. Ben represents T.R.U. on the ATA Board of Directors.**



**Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited is housed in a building bearing the name of companion company S&S Machine, Inc. in Madison Heights, VA. Assembly of the company's release aids and sights is done on the second floor of the manufacturing facility. Because S&S Machine continues to perform job shop work for several large local firms, the S&S name dominates the outside of the building.**

Greg's career as a talented machinist was launched, and it would carry him through the mid-1980s, working for various leading-edge machine shops in Michigan and Virginia. In 1985, though, Greg decided to head out on his own to start his own machine shop.

"It was time that I do that. I refinanced my home, brought in my younger brother Dan and my father as minor shareholders, and launched S&S Machine, Inc. The name stood for Summers & Sons, and referred to both the present and the future. The present was my father and his sons working together. The future was the prospect of someday working with my sons in the business."

The start for S&S Machine was rocky.

"I knew machining, but was totally naïve when it came to sales. In fact, I failed to land a single machining contract in the first three months we were in business. My wife Margaret and I had five young children, a home, a lease on a commercial building, three very expensive machines and no income. Needless to say, times were tough and our will was tested. But then finally we got that first job, and the work we did led to another job and then another and another. At first, it was just my brother and I working in the shop. Soon, though, with more jobs, we had to hire additional employees, and things just took off. In 1987, my father joined us as shop supervisor, which was an interesting turn of events. I teased him about doing time studies on his performance."

Between 1985 and 1995, S&S Machine grew in leaps and bounds, doing quality machining and machine maintenance work in such diverse fields as nuclear power plants, infant formula laboratories and electrolyte production facilities. In 1991, Greg Summers received the Small Business Man of the Year award from the local Chamber of Commerce.

By the mid-1990s, though, the world of small machine shops was beginning to change. More and more of the machine operations required by larger companies were being performed overseas. S&S Machine needed a new, steady customer.

"We were already doing machine work for SightMaster, a longstanding archery sight supplier," remembers Greg. "I had also been an archer and bowhunter for years, and I had various new archery product ideas that I believed would help all archers shoot better. It seemed a natural that we would begin designing, manufacturing and distributing our own archery products."

In 1995, Greg and Margaret Summers founded a companion company to S&S Machine. The new company would be called Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited (T.R.U.), and it would specialize in innovative archery releases and nocking points.

"The TRU-Nock metal D-loop was the very first product to be offered by Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited," says Greg. "That product is still alive and popular today. It prevents bowstring wear and offers a cleaner, more accurate shot."

"The next T.R.U. product was a brand-new series of ground-breaking releases that utilized a single or double metal balls attached to the bowstring. The releases then loosely attached to the spherical ball or balls to do away with string torque and eliminate bowstring wear. It was an excellent idea, but it never did particularly well in the marketplace. Sometimes, an innovative product can be upstaged by another product. At about the same

time, an innovative product can be upstaged by another product. At about the same



**Randy Summers is T.R.U. Ball's shooting staff coordinator. The T.R.U. shooting staff includes thousands of amateur shooters from local stores, along with pros like Dan McCarthy and Ginger Morehead. The shooting program also sends a credit back to the local dealer for items purchased by store shooters.**



**Dan Ellgass engineers parts and programs machines for the new T.R.U. Axcel sight line. Working with SolidWorks 3-D engineering software, Dan is able to create and virtually assemble parts long before actual parts exist.**



**Marc Rentz can engineer parts using SolidWorks and MasterCam software, and program the most complex CNC machines available. One of these machines is T.R.U.'s Makino A61 Horizontal Machining Center. This machine can constantly run parts without downtime because one work station (called a tombstone) swings into the machine while another tombstone is swung out of the machine to be reloaded with new blanks of material.**

*Continued from page 42*

time that we introduced T.R.U. Ball releases with single- and double-ball jaws, simple rope D-loops were also coming into play, and archers generally went with the simpler approach.

“In such changing-product times, all you can do is move on. We quickly adapted our releases to attach directly to the bowstring and to D-loops, or for use with integral ropes, and never looked back.”

Today, T.R.U. Ball offers one of the most sophisticated lineups of quality bowhunting and target releases. In the last decade, it's pioneered numerous release developments that have helped archers. Furthermore, its move-forward efforts have helped create and foster a release environment that now promotes and rewards constant design improvement.

“T.R.U., Inc. brought to market the first hand-held release to incorporate a non-collapsing trigger with virtually no movement before or after the shot sequence,” Greg relates. “This innovative trigger mechanism provided for a no-load trigger and only .004 of an inch of movement to fire the shot. That's imperceptible to the human hand and ideal for accurate, unanticipated shooting. About the same time, we also incorporated a rotating head into our Chappy Boss hand-held release. That improvement led to the elimination of inconstant release-rope or D-loop twisting as the archer turned his hand into his face at full draw.

“In addition, we were the first to offer a back-tension release (the Sweet Spot) that set the amount of travel after the archer came to his anchor point. Most prior back-tension release designs, even those with safeties, had a single fire setting. If the hand was rotated beyond that point of setting there would be a premature release, and for the safety models that premature release would occur as soon as the safety was released. The new and improved patented design of the T.R.U. Sweet Spot allowed the archer to activate a thumb lever and have a specific amount of travel every time for each individual shot. The archer could activate the thumb lever while the handle was rotated forward or while the handle was rotated backward and still have the same amount of travel. In other words, the speed of the back-tension release was set individually for each and every shot. This design improvement provided consistent shot timing for both uphill and downhill shots, despite form changes. It also proved safer for inexperienced archers who had not mastered the back-tension release. They could draw their bow without fear of a misfire.

“New-for-2007 is the T.R.U. HT back-tension release. It's a micro-adjustable back-tension release with a visual speed dial so that the archer can actually dial in the desired setting. This release also incorporates a head that is placed farther forward over the index finger to provide for easier release when using back-tension to fire the shot. The handle remains wide for comfort in the first two fingers that carry most of the bow poundage, and then tapers down toward the smaller fingers.”

T.R.U. has been just as innovative in hunting releases.

“Some years ago, we introduced a unique and quiet drop-away release connection with our Tornado model release. That connection allowed the release to drop away, fold back, or be tucked into one's sleeve when not in use. It allowed archers to pull arrows, carry items in the release hand or climb into a treestand without the release getting in the way.

“The innovative Tornado also featured the quick and simple operation of pulling the

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trigger to open the release jaws and letting up on the trigger to close the jaws. That enabled lightning-fast reloads.

“Yet another innovation was the forward positioning of the trigger on an index-finger release. We first did that with our Short-N-Sweet model. That inventive trigger re-positioning allowed archers using D-loops to gain back some of the arrow speed lost with the typical D-loop.

“More recently, the new T.R.U. Illuminator Glove Release incorporates a blue light in the handle portion of the release to allow archers to find their way to their stands in the dark without destroying their natural night vision. This new release is also the first to incorporate a new swivel axis between the head and handle grip portion. This provides for less torque when drawing the bow as the trigger, head and jaws of the release remain directly aligned behind the arrow, even when the hand is angled in other directions.”

Since 1995, Tomorrow’s Resources Unlimited has created an enviable reputation for release innovation, quality and variety. For 2007, though, the company surprised everyone by also introducing a state-of-the-art tournament sight.

“T.R.U. has been very successful in bringing new technology and improvements to the world of target and hunting releases,” Greg explains. “We felt that right now was the time to expand into other product categories in order to effect similar advancements in those categories.”

To get into sights properly, Greg decided to revisit sight sketches he had made years earlier and hit the drawing board again with improved sights in mind. To bolster his efforts, he also added Dan Ellgass to the T.R.U. staff, a highly qualified individual with expertise in product design, CNC programming and the very latest in machine operations. In addition, Greg purchased a \$500,000 high-speed horizontal machining center to be used specifically to produce the new sight line.

First to be offered in that line is the all-new Axcel AX-3000 Target Sight.

“The Axcel target sight features a new and patent-pending automatic gib-tensioning system along the elevation slide that results in a precise hydraulic feel when using the rapid travel to make quick yardage adjustments,” says Greg. “This novel system means there are no screws to adjust or loosen up. The Axcel also includes a bias pressure designed into the windage block to insure an ultra-tight connection. That unique connection system means that the scope won’t slip during the shot.

“In addition the new Axcel AX-3000 Target Sight sports an extremely strong and rigid elevation screw with precise threads for the tightest tolerances and the smallest increment of movement per click. Both the windage and elevation travel-per-click is just .00156, allowing the archer to choose 32 divisions with 20 clicks to produce a sight tape



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Expert machinists are necessary to produce the type of quality parts and products that make archers better. Archie Towler (1), who has been a Class A machinist for over 30 years, estimates job costs and quotes. Stephen Erbe (2) expertly runs a CNC turning center on the second shift. Ray Burford (3) started with the company as an assembly technician and learned to run the machines as he worked on his machinist journeyman’s card in a four-year degree program at a local state college. Wayne Weaver (4) manages the ten machines and three shifts of the company’s CNC machining department.

when using archery software programs. There is also a removable quick-change scope block which incorporates a 60 degree dovetail with detent, providing for accurate attachment, removal and re-attachment of the scope after tearing down for travel. Separate second- and third-axis adjustments are provided. The scope barrel is round with engraved alignment marks to allow the archer to rotate the scope to adjust the lens refraction with the eye, even when using the anti-rotation, key-style lock systems which many scopes have designed to stop or eliminate scope rotation. There is also a choice of models with a Mathews Harmonic Damper incorporated right into the extension bar to reduce shot vibration."

The sudden emergence of T.R.U. in the target-sight market begs the question about whether T.R.U. hunting sights are next. "We believe that the best way to bring a new product to market and prove to consumers that the product is worthy of purchase," answers Greg, "is to start at the top with the best. In this case, that means a top-of-the-line target sight. The next step is obviously hunting sights. Right now, our sight-making ability is being proven in tournaments by the world's best archers. We'll fine-tune our sight concepts in this manner, and then roll those proven approaches directly into advanced hunting models. This is the same sort of approach that automotive manufacturers use when they test their designs on the race track before the improvements are integrated into consumer automobiles."

Today, Greg Summers manages both S&S Machine and Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited on a daily basis, as well as various other pilot projects.

"It's a lot to handle, but I have plenty of support and excellent employees," says Greg. "My wife Margaret is a 50 percent partner and owner in everything we do. She's my strongest supporter."

"My two sons, Ben and Brian, are integral to the daily operations. Brian is our corporate controller. He handles most of the accounting functions, payroll, office management, human resources and has sales-management oversight. Ben, who is also an ATA board member, is our director

of marketing, with responsibilities in marketing, sales projection, parts management, assembly supervision and a host of other areas pertaining to daily hot spots. Both Brian and Ben have master's degrees in business administration.

"Kelly, my daughter, is our data-entry specialist, creating all orders and invoices

for product shipment.

"Marc Rentz, who is an exceedingly talented design and prototype engineer and who has been with us since 1987, has long been instrumental in the development and production of the entire T.R.U. Ball release line.

"Dan Ellgass, our newest design engineer, is responsible for the programming

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and fixturing of both release and sight parts. Dan has also been key in the development of the new Axcel line of archery sights.

“Randy Summers, my brother, is the archery sales manager. He has always been the front man to the customer as his gift in life is a great personality. Randy also helps with the T.R.U. Ball release shooting staff responsibilities.

“Nate Adams is one of the most gifted marketing designers in the industry. He works on everything from logos and packaging to magazine ads and our website. Brandon Reyes has recently joined us to help promote all of our archery products. Brandon is a top Mathews professional archer and



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helps manage the Axcel target-sight shooting staff. He also maintains our keep-in-touch relationship with our many customers. Scott Markham is responsible for assembly staffing and shipping, and quality assurance. Wayne Stanley is the supervisor of machining operations, with the responsibility over the machining workforce at S&S Machine.”

In addition to his beliefs in better products and company integrity, Greg Summers has for decades championed community involvement, family participation and ongoing business expansion.

“It’s important to be involved,” Greg explains. “We’re located one mile from a local school that is just now starting a National Archery in the Schools program, and we’re already involved. I recently hired Brandon Reyes, and Brandon is a level-two archery instructor. He’ll be helping out by working with the staff at the school. We’re excited

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Careful assembly, testing and eye-catching packaging are hallmarks of T.R.U. products. Jason Barringer (1) tests releases to ensure 100 percent reliability. Wade Viar and Amy Hutton (2) package releases. Mark Dalton (3) assembles hand-held releases. Scott Markham (4) runs the assembly department, while Mike Napier (4) is an experienced assembly technician. Rick Brightwell, Tony Neuenschwander, and Matt Boyer (5) pause for just a minute in the assembly department.



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about finally having NASP in Virginia and in our local school. NASP is a tremendous program, and we plan to help make it a success locally.

“We’re also very active in the overall archery community. We have representatives at many events and most major archery tournaments, and my son Ben was recently elected to a seat on the Archery Trade Association (ATA) Board of Directors. We’re thankful to have that opportunity, because we feel a responsibility to help the sport and the industry move forward, grow and prosper. Moreover, we believe that working on that board helps us better fulfill our “We Make Archery Better” mission statement. Ben is dedicated to helping ATA improve its standing in the archery community. Most recently, he’s worked on the ATA Board to meet with various state fish and wildlife agencies and members of Congress in an effort to get more federal excise tax dollars channeled back into archery programs.”

Tomorrow’s Resources Unlimited is a family-run business, with a long list of involved family members. Greg Summers is clear that that scenario holds both great benefits and a few pitfalls.

“Because involved family members have a vested interest in the company, they naturally tend to view things a bit differently. For example, my daughter Kelly and niece Kasie took over as supervisors of our assembly department several years ago. Their special dedication to the business resulted in the lowest assembly-hours-per-part in our company’s history, with the lowest amount of scrap.

“I am also blessed with family members who are gifted with different skill sets. My brother Randy has always had the gift of working with people, such as our shooters and dealers, and is an incredible asset to the company. My brother-in-law Marc Rentz has an incredible mind for product design and his son-in-law Nate Adams is one of the best graphic artists I have ever seen. My son Brian is excellent with numbers and computers, while my son Ben is a seasoned veteran in the political arena.

“It also helps if everyone has a strong



**TOP:** Brandon was hired by T.R.U., Inc. in January as a dealer representative and factory pro. Brandon is well-respected by his fellow pros and is a hero to many young shooters.

**BOTTOM:** Nate Adams is a graphic designer and product artist. Nate’s talent in web design has produced several internet sites. He also consults with T.R.U. engineers to make products look better and has been instrumental in creating bold new packaging.

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work ethic and shares the company's drive to be successful.

"The flip side of the coin, however, is that a family-run business puts extra pressure of every participating family member. Like my father before me, I have had to prove that the members of my family are the best before they can be promoted to a new position. The work of every family member is always under a microscope, as it should rightly be in any family-run business.

"There is also the tendency of family members to bring our work home. Work dominates our family gatherings and our grandchildren are often shortchanged for time by their busy parents. On top of that, we rarely get to vacation together, because having too many of us away from the business at the same time could hurt the business. At times, business disagreements between family members can get sticky. Usually that's because family members can say things that would not be said in a normal employer-employee relationship. Too often, family members may know which buttons to push in order to irritate or inflame a situation. Anyone entering into a family-run business scenario should be aware of all of these things."

The future is something that is frequently on Greg Summers' mind, and even more so now. In recent months, Greg successfully battled pancreatic cancer with a tricky operation to remove a tumor. In nearly 93 percent of such pancreatic cases, the tumor involved proves to be malignant. Fortunately, Greg's tumor was benign. With a strict diet and occasional insulin shots, the prognosis is that Greg will soon be back to normal (other than a 50-pound weight loss since December).

"That ordeal has caused me to look at things differently," says Greg. "It's put a new spin on the importance of sustainable growth for our companies and the livelihood those companies provide for our family and our employees.

"It's caused me to revisit our core goal of providing products of all sorts that make end-users more successful. We've long done that in archery with T.R.U. Ball releases and we're now doing that with Axcel sights. We've also launched plans to

diversify somewhat by moving into additional sporting markets. In recent months, we've moved boldly into golf products. Marc Rentz is heading up a project to perfect and introduce a series of innovative new T.R.U. Ball Golf putters. That move is an attempt to broaden our base and better ensure our future."

Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited is a company that stands out in the archery industry. It moves fast, innovates, adapts, promotes and delivers. It has made archery better. For more information on Tomorrow's Resources Unlimited, Inc., Circle #115, visit their website at [truball.com](http://truball.com) or call (434) 929-2800. 



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