

HOT BRASS

A Publication of The Gun Club of America

VOLUME TWENTY FIVE

Rhonda Ezell – Still on Target!

page 12

Meet the Benefit Hunter

page 24

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Kettles: **AMERICAN HERO**

page 38

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IN THIS ISSUE

3 Offhand Shots from the Editor



7 A Note from
the President . . .

A Piece of History Thriving in the Present



9

12



**Rhonda
Ezell Still
on Target!**



16

*May I introduce
you to Mr. and Mrs.
Rust and Corrosion?*

The Gun Club of America's Benefit Hunter 24



**LIEUTENANT
COLONEL 38
CHARLES KETTLES:
AMERICAN HERO**



44 Where's Your Flag?



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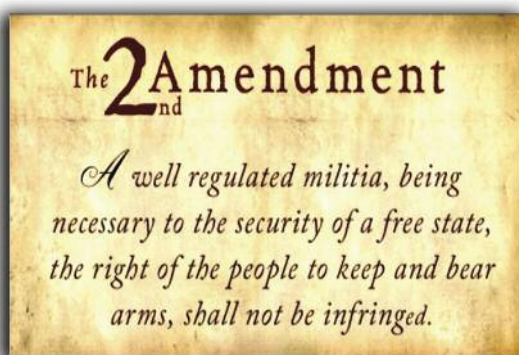
Offhand Shots from the Editor

By Lenée Landis, Hot Brass Editor



The 145th NRA Annual Meetings this year in Louisville gave me the Annual Opportunity to revel in a place where just about everyone knows the importance of the 2nd Amendment, the one that protects all the other amendments. People who don't know much about firearms have the opportunity to be curious and ask questions in a place where people like to be helpful.

One instance of this came to me at the Women's Leadership Forum luncheon, an event now in its 10th year. I was there as a guest invited by Marsha Petrie Sue who hosted a table which included such accomplished women as Tracy and Lanny Barnes, Olympian biathletes; Athena Means, owner of Gun Goddess; and Athena Lee, 3 gun champion shooter.



At one point, Josephine Byrd, an African American grandma in her mid seventies was introduced onstage along with Gabby Franco and Dana Loesch. Josephine is the remarkable lady who took on the fight against the state of Delaware's public housing after she was told she could not have a gun to defend herself though there had been gang crime there. Instead, they told her if you get a gun, we will kick you out. Of course, the NRA backed her fight and she was triumphant.

When introduced, she received a standing ovation from all the ladies in the Marriott ballroom. I saw a couple of the women who had been our servers



standing at rapt attention and also clapping—they seemed stunned by this woman and very proud of her. Normally the servers at these functions stand along the wall quietly, hands behind them, one eye on the tables to

Marsha Petrie Sue, professional motivational speaker, big game hunter, fisherman, and has enough interests to fill up the page, with Robin Dawson, a dynamite fundraiser for the Friends of the NRA, at the WLF luncheon. Want some good business tips? Check her out at marshapetriesue.com

anticipate a guest looking for something they can provide. Today was no different, except suddenly these two young African American women who were working broke into spontaneous applause after hearing the importance of Ms. Josephine's contribution.

I was overcome--these two ladies needed to be invited, they needed to know they were welcome and that this was their fight too. Yes, of course I got up immediately and went over to them, introduced myself, and passed along that message.

Interestingly, later in the day I would meet one of the GCA's newest members—Rhonda Ezell who fought a similar fight with the City of Chicago as the defendant. You can check out her story on page 12. That is Rhonda on the cover of this issue, a piece of hot brass flying.



Lenée and Rhonda Ezell - one of GCA's newest members - Welcome Rhonda!

For people not up to speed on history, the original gun control was a way to keep guns out of the hands of the slaves--that it has been glossed over and obscured seems troublesome—"why the 2nd Amendment was written" is an important issue for all American citizens.



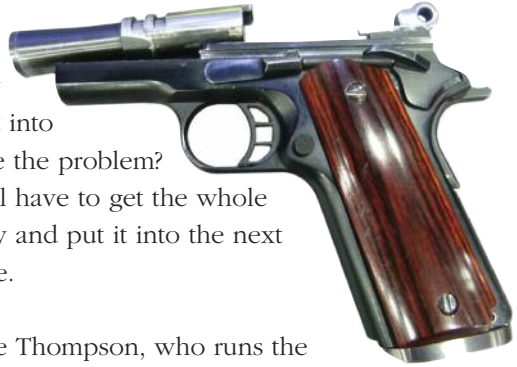
The shows are a great place to meet our members, and they do no end of interesting things. For example, Capt Mike Carathers USN (Ret) began making bolt action pens, everything from camo to ones with "Support our troops" and the flag.

Capt Mike Carathers, USN (Ret) and Cheryl Carathers stopped by the AGI/GCA booth to say hello. Below are some of the beautiful bolt action pens he has made.



Jami and Joseph LaJoy brought along a 1911 with some issues - check it out on page 5.

Joseph LaJoy who owns LaJoy Precision out of Fox Lake, IL stopped by and showed us a very interesting piece that was brought into his shop to fix. Can you diagnose the problem?



We'll have to get the whole story and put it into the next issue.

Mike Thompson, who runs the range in Piru, stopped over to show us a new Italian venture he is involved with. This unique firearm was filmed for an upcoming issue of GunTech.



Check out this new Italian made firearm! Mike Thompson knows a good business platform when he sees it.

Maybe Voodoo Tactical has limited its market by calling it the Lady Voodoo?



Mike and Jack also expanded their horizons, checking out the Lady Voodoo Tactical range bag. We first saw this in vertical form with the 2 straps used as a backpack on a young lady about 9 years old who purchased one at the

show. The thing about this color, men, is someone is not going to accidentally take off with your black tactical bag.



Alan Walters and Jennifer Lehman

Alan Walters and Jennifer Lehman stopped by. Alan is a new AGI gunsmithing student who has a clear idea of what he wants to do even though he has added responsibilities. We applaud his determination to work hard to achieve his career goal. Where there's a will, there's a way.

As Gene Kelly says in his column, feel free to write me an e-mail and tell me where you learned to shoot, who got you into shooting. We love seeing your face and hearing your stories, stories that people in other countries really aren't in the position to tell. I can tell you I was pretty shocked when I read Dana Delesoy's article on page 30. We fondly call Dana our Canadian Hot Brass correspondent . . . this time, we learned our neighbors to the north won't let you have a gun there if you want to use it for self defense.

WHAT???



The original Wright Airplane Company hangars are the only structures left at the sight of the old Inland Manufacturing plant. The physical shape of the hangar was the inspiration for the "Inland Logo."

After the NRA, we went to Inland Manufacturing in Dayton, OH and saw firsthand the area where the Wright Brothers settled. Their hangars are a part of the old Inland plant which is quite famous for turning out the M1 Carbine that saved many a GI and Marine in WWII. Ron Norton has brought the old rifle back to life so a new generation can experience it. This story is on page 9.

I encourage you to tell me any story that piques your interest. Where there are people, there's a story. The Flags of Valor article (page 44, and back cover) arose when my son-in-law, a police officer, called. He had been in Washington DC for Police Memorial Week and noticed the Flags of Valor company at the time. Both he and my daughter were in the Army, and the flag has always been a factor—he also does the police color guard. (Once they were flagless, they had given theirs to their wonderful elderly next door neighbor who was a veteran.) Well, you know how it is when you don't get something when you see it, and then you regret it . . . on the 4th of July, after checking out the list of vendors who were at Tent City in DC, he determined it was Flags of Valor he wanted to order from.



The flag arrived on the 7th, having been ordered on the holiday. He was astonished at the care and customer service in the flag, a work of art that immediately found its place of honor on the living room wall. He was

appreciative about the manner in which it was packed, and the thoughtful card inside, signed by the owner of the company Brian, a combat veteran.

He was so excited to receive this flag, like a 4 year old at Christmas. What can I say after that? We live in a great country.

I'd like to hear your story, Lenec

Email me at:

Lenec@gunclubofamerica.com

On behalf of the men and women of Flags of Valor, I want to personally thank you for supporting our business and our nation. We believe "Made in America" still means something and we love our country. This flag was handmade in the United States by a combat veteran. We hope it exceeds your expectations.

*Thank you,
Brian*

A Note from the President . . .

How and Where Did You First Get Into Shooting?



Gene Kelly, President

Recently we celebrated the Gun Club of America's Tenth Anniversary! As part of the celebration we did a special GCA Live Webcast with many of our top instructors as guests. We interviewed them about their journey into the firearms industry and their personal passion about guns, starting with "how did you first get into shooting?" For those of you who are GCA SilverPLUS members, we included it on a special Bonus DVD that was mailed with the June 2016 issue of GunTech. We received a lot of very positive feedback from members who watched the webcast live or viewed the bonus DVD.



As I interviewed each of the instructors, the commonality among them was surprising. In fact almost all started out with a BB gun or air rifle at a young age. This provided them with an opportunity to learn safety and responsibility, while experimenting and having fun shooting.

This was, of course, without all the massive restrictions we have today. Most all of them rapidly moved up to the ubiquitous .22 LR in various platforms but most were single shot rifles. This led them to hunting or target shooting and future enjoyment of the sport, and that led them to wanting to understand more about the guns and ammunition themselves, how things worked, along with thoughts of how they might improve upon them – which is what the GCA is all about!

Meanwhile, the adults around them were generally encouraging, exposing them to more firearms of different types. Each person developed their own passion, following their individual path towards greater knowledge and experience with firearms. Now, years later, all of us are benefiting from their numerous decades of experience.

How about you? How did you get started shooting? I know in many cases it was a Father, a friend's Dad or a relative who first taught you to shoot. Maybe it was learning to shoot at summer camp or possibly it was just getting that first BB gun from an open minded, freedom loving parent. Anyway, I would like to know. Send us your experience and we will share them with other members. Send them to Lenée Landis at lenee@gunclubofamerica.com

Now, what are you doing to encourage the next generation of shooters? Well, first of all, if you haven't already done so I would suggest buying a BB gun for your children or grandchildren and teaching them how to properly use and respect it.

There are also lots of single parent families around, many of whom would like to connect their kids with responsible adults. You could offer to take the entire family shooting. Done carefully and right, with a strong emphasis on safety, you could put a whole new generation of shooters on the right path.

That is one of the things I enjoy most, taking a person who has never shot firearms before and teaching them to do it properly and safely. Often I am rewarded with a huge grin that makes it all worthwhile. If done properly they will also demonstrate a new sense of personal confidence. I think we all need to invest in gifting a BB gun to a young person, with the appropriate instruction included of course.

So send us your stories of how you got started in shooting, and even better, how you are getting new shooters started.

Best regards,

Gene Kelly, President, Gun Club of America

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A Piece of History Thriving in the Present

The new Inland Manufacturing operation in Dayton, OH has taken root out of a remembrance of dreams, appreciation of the past, and the opportunity to bring an old faithful partner of our US military back to life.



Taking a step back in time:



In 1941, Inland Manufacturing was a division of General Motors contracted to support the war effort by manufacturing the M1 carbine, among other things. There were 9 outfits that put out these weapons, making 6 million of them in a 5 year timeframe. Inland made almost half of that total. The Dayton plant also was the sole manufacturer of the M1A1 Paratrooper folding stock version.

This division of GM existed from 1918-1989 and geared up production many times. They made components for the DeHaviland DH4 aircraft during World War I, and everything from helmet liners to tank shoes to gun sights for the Navy's Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft guns in WWII. Part of the plant was built by the Wright Brothers, who moved there in 1884 and remained for life. The plant still stands though parts of it have been razed. This is an area rich in history, creativity, and work ethic.

Ron Norton, a Dayton youngster then, recalls growing up in the town where neighbors mentioned they "used to make guns at the Inland." Many people had an association of some sort with the Inland Manufacturing plant, and he wishes now he had taken notes. When the opportunity arose, Ron bought the name rights to the company and put into motion the current manufacturing process of the M1 carbine, 1911s, and Model 37 Ithaca trench guns from original mil spec prints. They began shipping about a year ago.

The current operation is housed in a building whose previous life was as an environmental testing facility for the state of Ohio, built like a tank, to government spec, and which houses all the resources they need here. It's only a couple miles away from the old plant.

In a genius move, Ron decided to utilize the many local CNC shops and have them build the guns to the original specs. During the wartime effort, Inland

machined a lot in-house but the local machine shop infrastructure also supported them. Barrels are done by Acme Tool and Die, exactly the same as Inland did it originally. Green Mountain does the bore.

This is a streamlined operation, focused on quality. Everything is prepped and ready to go daily, assembled in the morning, shipped in the afternoon to MKS, their distributor. They turn out 300 carbines and 50+ 1911s a month. They also have a partnership with Ithaca in Upper Sandusky for 50 shotguns, Ithaca 37 trench guns, for which Inland does the final inspection and packaging. They are ramping up toward 100 pieces a month.

Inland Manufacturing sources all components from the United States. The bayonet lug is machined by Ithaca and the heat shield stamped by a company in Xenia, OH as well as springs and rings twisted and cut. Supplies come in from Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Georgia, Dayton and several other places in Ohio. The 1911 components come mainly from Massachusetts.



Josh Norton

Josh Norton preps the stocks, and performs the stain and oil process, matching colors then prepping for oil. He has an appreciation for wood and does the stain and hand rub on the stocks and handguards. His artistry provides a steady stream between his workbench and the drying room.

The average build is 30-50 guns a day, and he usually works to try to stay ahead, racking up about 100 stocks on hand. You can select different grades of wood including A, double

A, and triple A grades as well as standard wood. A walnut paratrooper AAA grade stock receives 10 finishes of oil while typically there are two on standard grades.

Stocks vary in price based on the grades; we saw some gorgeous grain if you are looking for an M1 carbine that is a work of art. They use a linseed based formula, similar to the original. It even smells right. All of these stocks come with a heavy dose of

10 free TLC.



An important part of the process is taking the time to pair the stocks with the handguards for fit, the final build process matches the handguards to the select wood. They have a fixture in house which they use to hand stamp the cartouche. They are building another rack for handguards and paratrooper stocks. The oil and stain process usually takes a week to 10 days and they finish with final contour, stain and oil.

How serious are they about the wood? They had the opportunity to meet some of the family members of one of the wood contractors that provided original stocks for Inland, and hope to acquire wood from them in the future.

They function test in a container range at 7 yards, the box is rated for everything short of 50BMG. There is also a 50 yard range out back.

This shop is just as serious about customer service, and Nik Naff handles repairs. Maybe two rifles per week come in for warranty work, though 80% of the issues have not been warranty but the use of incorrect ammo, or 40-50 year old ammo.

Nik Naff



Ron mentioned M1 carbines like quality ammo, and they recently partnered with Aguila, the best ammo they could find for their carbine. They found the accuracy and reliability of the .30 Aguila to be top shelf and flawless. Their 110 grain, .30 cal full metal jacket ball ammo is the same type used in the original guns in WWII.

It is fitting that Inland Manufacturing has not only been able to pay homage to the illustrious past of the region but has claimed territory in the job market for the area, bringing a historic icon back for us all. Ron Norton has successfully preserved history.

inland-mfg.com

The original Inland plant.



Rhonda Ezell – Still on Target!

We had the privilege and pleasure of meeting Rhonda Ezell at the NRA Meetings in Louisville this year, and welcome her as one of our newest GCA members.

Rhonda Ezell is a unique woman who was the first named plaintiff against the City of Chicago in a fight led by the Second Amendment Foundation when the city required potential gun owners to take an hour of training in order to legally own a gun, but prohibited any ranges in the city. Chicago had already had to revamp their treatment of gun owners after the Heller and MacDonald decisions by the Supreme Court.

Though the case was won by the plaintiffs on this issue, there are still no ranges in town. That has not stopped Rhonda. She just shot an M1 Garand for the first time at 75 and 200 yards - Yes, right on target!



Rhonda Ezell at the 2016 NRA Meetings.

What is she up to now? Here she is in her own words:

I am a lifetime member of the Illinois State Rifle Association (ISRA) as well as the NRA. I started my shooting experience just going to the gun range trying to learn how to shoot my firearm properly in early 2000.

It was a new experience. I lived in a bad neighborhood and some gang bangers were trying to harm my son, so I went to the gun store and bought my first firearm for protection. I had to go to the range and learn how to use it, that was many years ago. **My only concern was to be able to protect my family, and not become a victim.**

I got involved in more progressive shooting in 2013 when I was invited out to a friend's place, where he has 80 acres of land. He created Freedom Day and he invites us out every year to celebrate all the 2nd Amendment litigation and fights we've won or are fighting against the city or state. We bring our own firearms and there are a lot and I mean a lot of firearms, all types. We share firearms knowledge and education and we have a great time without any worries.



Rhonda at the ISRA Range in 2014 on NRA Day which is an annual range open house.

I got the opportunity to shoot several firearms of my choice. I participate in this event every year. I will be in attendance this year as well as my granddaughter Marley, she also attended last year.

There are still no ranges available in the city of Chicago considering I've won a Landmark case making history in the United States of America against the city of Chicago to have them. I continue to go outside of the city to continue training for ,safety and education in the use of firearms. I was blessed with having the opportunity to take a 24 hour Beginning/Intermediate Defense Handgun Class course in 2014 with some great people, John and Vicky Farnam. I shot up close and personal, from behind a barricade, weak hand, ejecting placebo round, shooting in the dark, and hostage situation just to name a few. I passed and was certified.

It was the most educating, tough, strong, powerful, exciting experience I've had to date. Eventually I wish to join a shooting club and continue to learn as much as I can about this industry.

I'm now working on a project with the Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) to get the urban communities involved in exercising their constitutional rights. I continue the fight for the future of the Second Amendment in my city and state because it is needed. I talk to women and men every chance I get about their rights.



I give a bio business card to everyone I talk to so that if they have any questions about our conversation, they can reach me.

Shooting an AR15 from a bench rest.

I'm always giving advice on where people can go and learn to shoot. Whenever I'm on the range and see someone who I think needs assistance I volunteer my experience. Right now there are no programs to help the people who may need financial assistance when trying to get their required license. We would have to work through litigation to try and get fees reduced so the less fortunate can exercise their constitutional rights to keep and bear arms.

I want to leave a legacy for my granddaughter. Her name is Marley Jordan Williams and she is the latest person I introduced to the gun range. She's soon to be 6 years old. She volunteered with me again this year to work at the NRA Open House at the ISRA Range.

This year I decided to let her shoot for the first time, and she did a great job. She even hit her target a few times, that was amazing. She did not want to stop so we let her shoot for a while, she said she really enjoyed her shooting experience. I was happy that it was me who introduced her to her very first shot. By the way, I started her off with an Airsoft rifle. I will gradually upgrade, the next one will be a BB gun. We will move slow and take our time.

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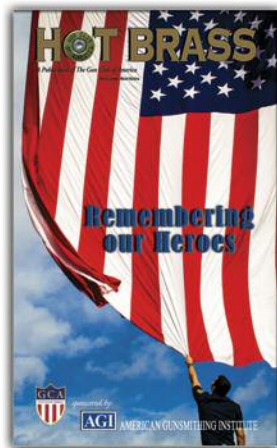
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from

The Dunn Armory . . .

May I introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Rust and Corrosion?

Contributed by Robert Dunn

Rust and corrosion have enabled me to make money for as long as I can remember, but they're not my friend. When I was very young, I remember getting a small bump in my allowance for cleaning up a bunch of rusty parts for something my Dad was rebuilding with a product called Naval Jelly (phosphoric acid). I guess I did a good job because it wasn't too long until I graduated to helping him strip and clean the barrel and receiver of his new deer rifle, a sporterized Springfield 1903A3! We then cold blued the rifle. That finish has lasted over 40 years and it still looks good! Bluing itself is a form of corrosion, but I will touch on that later in this article.

My Mom was an antique dealer and she was always bringing home things that either needed to be cleaned up or adamantly left untouched, as the patina of certain collectibles increased their value. I spent many hours with wire brushes, steel wool and other tools and products to help restore many items that came into our possession. Corrosion and rust seem to follow me around.

Living on the East Coast, I was aware many places salt their roads during the winter to combat the snow and ice. I always thought it was a shame to see the quarter panels and frames from all the cool 1960s muscle cars whittled away during the 70s! When my family moved to Puerto Rico for a few years, I was really amazed at how fast anything made of metal would rust away to nothing. Living on a small island means that you are surrounded by



Over 40 years after my Dad and I cold blued his Springfield rifle, it still looks great!

salt water and the air has salt in it too. You could never be far enough inland to be safe from corrosion. Living in these conditions made me conscious of atmospheric corrosion and interested in how to stop the deterioration processes.

Corrosion is a problem with firearms. Not only can the metal parts corrode but the wood and plastic parts are also susceptible to corrosion. Rust and corrosion are bad for your firearms because they reduce the life of your gun and can ultimately cause the weapon to fail! Corrosion can also reduce the value of your firearm. Being a good gun owner should involve taking steps to prevent rust and corrosion from affecting your firearms.

I have done my share of car restorations over the years, but these days my projects seem to be limited to firearms that have been mistreated, uncared for, or stored improperly. I have tried various techniques for getting rid of rust and keeping it at bay. For years, I have watched my friends, Bob Dunlap, and Ken Brooks conduct experiments on old frames and barrels to test how well various lubricants and finishes hold up to the harsh Oregon weather conditions. Where we live is not too far from the coast and the salty air attacks our prized possessions. There is probably a good reason they use Ballistol and Break Free CLP.

When I studied chemistry, I found it interesting to learn about rust (iron oxide) and corrosion (electrochemical oxidation). Many of the tools and recreational devices I enjoy using are made of some type of common metal, like steel and iron.

These materials are selected because of their strength, not necessarily for their





anti-corrosion properties and because of this, we have devised many ways to help prevent rust and corrosion. Things like paint, plating and other

processes and finishes can help keep corrosion to a minimum. Another way to minimize this is to create an alloy, which is a combination of two or more metallic elements. Stainless steel, a steel alloy that contains chromium, is a good example that is commonly used in the firearms industry. It is corrosion resistant and retains good tensile strength.

Rust is a form of corrosion that results in a visibly red or sometimes yellowish porous surface texture. This is caused by the reaction of iron and oxygen when exposed to moisture (oxidation). The alloys used for manufacturing firearms are prime candidates for attack by rust and corrosion when they are exposed to inadequate storage conditions, harsh weather, salts from your body, atmospheric conditions, and exposure to solvents and chemicals. This is a prime reason why military testing in the “real world” is so valuable to firearms manufacturers.

I’m starting to feel like the “Rust Doctor” because I have brought so many rusty guns back to life. The condition of some of the firearms I have seen is sometimes hard to believe. I have spent countless hours battling the effects of rust on guns. Rust and corrosion can literally bond or fuse parts together, much like a good epoxy does.

Prevention is the key when it comes to corrosion. If you keep your guns in a gun cabinet or safe, use a dehumidifier to keep moisture off of your guns. Even small things like drying your gun before stowing it will help keep corrosion away. A good practice to adhere to is to actually clean and lube your firearms after using them, or at least before storing them until the next hunting season rolls around!

There are many good products out there to clean and lubricate your guns. Just to name a few: Rem Oil, Slip 2000, Break Free, Ballistol, Frog Lube, etc. When it comes to maintaining and storing black powder guns, I like to use Thompson Center’s Bore Butter. It’s all natural and smells like pine!

If you are dealing with a gun that has already been attacked by rust and corrosion, there are several ways you can get it off the firearm. Most of the time, I simply get dirty and use old sand paper with a couple drops of oil on it to take down all of the



fuzzy surface rust. The oil prevents the rust particles from forming an ugly cloud in my workspace. I eventually switch to finer and finer grades of steel wool until the job is done. I also use a variety of picks, scrapers, brushes, and cotton swabs to get at small parts and tight spots.

If time is of no concern, or the gun is so corroded the action won't open or other parts will not mechanically function correctly, I will soak the gun in a vinegar bath. I have used both distilled white vinegar and apple cider vinegar and I like the apple the best for rust and the white vinegar for cleaning up the wood. This is a fairly cheap alternative to using more expensive industrial cleaners and such.

With that being said, even though vinegar is an acid and works wonders on rust, sometimes you have to get out the big guns. I have used Kroil, Liquid Wrench, and BP Blaster penetrating oils on super tough jobs with good results. An old trick I used to use on muscle cars was to mix a half and half solution of transmission fluid and acetone in an oiler can to break loose rust-frozen parts. Some other solutions I've used in a pinch are vegetable oil mixed with nail polish remover, paint thinner or WD-40. Trust me, these "hillbilly" penetrating oil solutions work really well.

Though most of the time we are trying to prevent corrosion, sometimes we fight fire with fire and create rust or oxidation to prevent rust from occurring, as is the case with many types of passivation processes (bluing) commonly used. Rust bluing involves swabbing a mixture of hydrochloric acid and nitric acid onto the parts you want to blue. After letting the parts rust for a few days, buff them down with steel wool to reveal the black iron oxide finish. Then, rub in a bit of your favorite gun oil to prevent any further rusting.

Other methods of bluing are: cold bluing (a selenium dioxide based compound), hot caustic bluing (use of alkali salts), and fume bluing (use of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid). There are many other techniques commonly used in the firearms industry to create a corrosion resistant finish on gun parts like: Parkerizing (a chemical phosphate conversion coating using manganese or phosphorous dioxide), nitre bluing (chemical/heating process), browning, color case hardening, and the use of "spray and bake" finishes such as Cerakote or DuraCoat.

All of these methods aid in combating the effects of rust and corrosion. Proper care and maintenance of your firearm go a long way in preserving its life and value—remember, rust never sleeps!

“I have this old gun that needs some work . . .”

GCA Member and certified AGI Gunsmith John Weaver stopped by the booth at the NRA meetings to show us some of the work he has been doing recently. Along with gunsmithing, he has acquired some painting skills--we want to share some of his creativity for inspiration! In his own words . . .

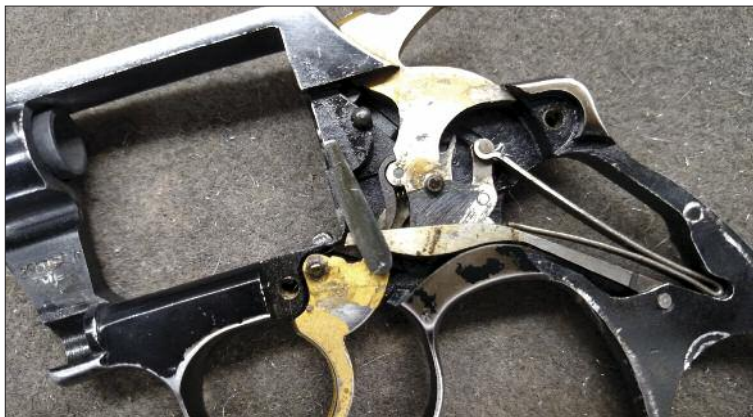


Certified AGI Gunsmith John Weaver

To paraphrase a common saying, J.R.'s GunWorx has many customers who come in saying . . . "I have this old gun that needs some work" . . . then proceed to describe some issue they have or the missing part of a firearm they've had for quite some time and would like fixed. Sometimes it's one handed down from family member to family member. Other times it's one they bought a long time ago and have shot a lot or broken in the field. It can even be a shotgun found in a fencerow while hunting. Either way, we do our best to provide some advice on what could be a fix along with the recommendation to bring it in for a more thorough inspection and quote for repair.

Colt Cobra – Side plate off to disassemble for refinishing

One of the fascinating things that can be learned as a gunsmith is the history of the firearms that come in for repair, rework, or in



this case, refinishing. This is a snub nosed .38 made by Colt. I had always thought they were all made of steel, yet this one was much too light. A quick check of the peeling paint (yes paint, I suspect some sort of spray enamel) revealed an alloy frame. A quick lookup of the model name located on the barrel (Cobra) revealed it was a Colt with two firsts associated with it.

- 1) it was the first model Colt named after a snake.
- 2) it was the first model they produced with an alloy frame with production starting just after WWII.



Taking it a step at a time as the parts come out

As with many early alloy framed firearms, the finish wore to a shiny silver. At some point in the past, this one was painted in an attempt to cover the

natural wear of the original finish. They also must've felt artistic as they tried to fancy it up a bit with gold on the trigger and hammer. The disassembly photos show how much of this paint was flaking off the frame. After taking out all the moving parts from the frame, my thumbnail took a good portion of this paint off. After a good ultrasonic bath to remove residual oils and carbon, a bead blaster took care of any paint my thumbnail couldn't scrape off.

Just before removing the hammer and trigger

The customer wanted the same colors as it was refinished, so a quick review of the DuraCoat choices for black yielded a Matte Black with the metallic gold as the choices to restore the finish on this old gun. With the



parts prepped and hanging by wires in the paint booth (in reality, a large box) the DuraCoat was mixed according to instruction and put into an airbrush (sorry, no picture of that scene). All the black was shot first and allowed to cure before taking off the hanging wires. Then the parts for the gold were prepped and hung. A good mix of the gold DuraCoat and the airbrush made quick work of the small parts. After curing, clear DuraCoat was shot over the gold as recommended by the DuraCoat techs.



After a few days of cure time, everything was reassembled with particular attention to fit and alignment. With the original grips back on, it came out looking pretty good. Check it out on the top of the next page.

Almost completely apart, this picture shows the state of the old finish on this Colt Cobra

The finished Cobra!



Another finished work by J.R.'s GunWorx:

A personal 1911 finished with cobalt blue DuraCoat and hydro dipped for a carbon fiber look. When I discovered these grips with the famous lines from the Declaration of Independence, as a veteran I had to have them. With a few polished steel details and the slide in its original blue, it makes a distinctive firearm.



Personal 1911 built with a Caspian frame, Slide from Brownells, and internals from GI surplus

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MEET JAMES

The Gun Club of America's Benefit Hunt

By Lenée Landis

ES...

b

ter

We told you last issue we'd
introduce you to our newest guy
on the team, James Parker...

When James first arrived

I was struck by his enthusiasm and the fact he is not afraid to work. Then I began receiving text photos of his weekend exploits. This lifelong hunter was turning into a shooter too. Seems we had a perfect fit.



His approach to work seems like he gears up for the next quest: one of his jobs here is finding benefits for GCA members and it is something he seems naturally programmed to do. He is the type of person who has an instinct for what needs to be done, what could be done, and natural solutions for it. He is an interested party, so he puts puzzle pieces together. He is equally serious about fun.

James has been working since he was 12 years old, starting out at the Lake Berryessa garbage service, picking up garbage bins.



At 15, he got a job in Napa packing shipments in the clothing business, becoming the warehouse manager which he continued to do through attending Napa Valley junior college. He then went to UC Davis and worked through college for the same employer doing property management and remodels. He has always worked miscellaneous jobs: mowed lawns, cut wood, weed whacked, garbage man, painted, anything people needed around the house. He had goals, things to purchase: ammo was \$40 a box for Winchester ballistic tips. Grandma used to buy the Remington Yellow Jackets, but rationed boxes of 50 to him after he shot a whole brick of .22 in a short time.

He continued working for the same man who owned the property and clothing business after he graduated college, up until the man planned to retire. He then came over to the America Gunsmithing Institute and the Gun Club of America in May 2015.

He was 6 when his parents split up, and his Mom moved James and his brother from a small town in the Bay Area to Lake Berryessa which his grandparents, James and Jeannie Tarap, called home. It was called Monticello then. The house sits a couple miles from the 8,000 acre private lease where his grandparents run a family hunting club, which the family has done for about 65 years. Two great uncles live within 300 yards. His great-grandmother, who died in 2008, lived a mile down the road.

It is on this lease the large extended family has fed all their families over the years. James hiked around with the hunters, and started helping skin deer when he was 9 or 10. He got his first deer when he was 12. Every hunter in the family killed their first deer with a Winchester '94 in .32 special with a peep sight. He got two deer and three pigs with it.

His own first gun was a used, left handed Ruger® Mark II in 7mm Remington Magnum for \$500. He had to put scope rings on it which cost \$60, and then a \$300 Leupold VX2, 3 x 9 scope. He deems it “the greatest gun ever” and will never forget the joy it brought because he worked all summer as a 12 year old to save the money to purchase it himself at 13.

Hunting season has always been a very big deal: 30 family members would meet at his great-grandmother's house. His great uncle is the president of the hunting club, and other family members are board members, in charge of roads, treasurer, etc. The 2nd weekend of August is always deer season in “A” zone, where the property is located.

The extended family would take a week off from work and they would hunt. He recalls people sleeping on couches, his little cousins sleeping in his pop up trailer, and the smell of tarweed, a plant which exudes sticky stuff that sticks to your pants, along with the aroma of fresh homegrown tomatoes. James says “Opening week of deer season is like a holiday to my family.”

He smiles and says, they didn't have camo—the family didn't have the means to buy extras. They hunted in blue jeans and flannel shirts, didn't have binoculars, and used REM oil to clean their guns. They were old school, no target practicing. In fact, his first day on a shooting range was January 2016 at SHOT Show.

Planning has progressed beyond drawing lines in the dirt. These days he is on an email thread with his cousins planning the hunt that includes uncles, great uncles, cousins, and their kids. They are plotting the big drives across the land and where they will push the canyons starting August 13, which is opening day of rifle season.





After a morning of hunting, they would return to his grandmother's which was outfitted with a porch, all netted, six freezers, and a 10x15 meat locker for hanging the meat. The crew would hunt starting at 5am, then come in at 10 or 11am, pulling in with 10 jeeps at the house where grandma and great-grandma made big breakfasts and lunches. He calls his grandma "the king of milk gravy." They would eat,

and then process meat—hanging, skinning, cleaning, and wrapping and sealing in white butcher paper, then eat lunch. You could get two deer in the state of California, and as many pigs as you had a tag for.

Every piece of meat was used, it was a sin to waste meat in this family. His grandma made stew out of hogs and deer, even neck meat was ground up, and they would make chorizo with a hand crank meat grinder. They also raised steer and chickens growing up, and had winter ducks, quail, and doves. Even the grandmas hunted, raising the family on ethically hunted organic food before it was in vogue—when that was just the way you lived your life. His family used to say "the West was not won on salads and vegetables."

His grandfather had a lot of sayings . . . **"save your money"** he would tell people, **"don't be a simpleton"** he would advise his grandson. He was of Hungarian descent, and was full of stories, especially about "Oakdale, PA, the capital of the world." Of course he was a Pittsburgh Steelers fan. He had stories about the continents he visited in the Navy, and about his old Oakdale friend Paulie, who he hitchhiked with to California. He told about the 14 blondes and 1 redhead who jumped off the Allegheny Bridge when he left, because they couldn't imagine life without him.

His grandfather was hands on: he would do yard duty during milk break and lunch at the elementary school which had 80 people, 16 in the 6th grade class, where James had killed rattlesnakes on the playground. He spent many Friday nights at Memorial Stadium in Napa, wearing his Pittsburgh Steelers jacket or hat. James will be 26 this year. These memories have shaped his attitude and formed his work ethic. He was very close to his grandfather and says his character showed even in criticism, a positive that kept James going, focusing on goals.

This year, James is taking the last week of August off and heading to the Ruby Mountains for Nevada archery. He got into bow hunting in his early 20s when he moved to UC Davis and took archery as an elective PE class. He just took his mom and grandma camping over the weekend.

It is his family who taught him lessons that will last a lifetime. A lesson he learned early was gun safety. Riding in the back of jeep, his barrel passed his uncle. His uncle spontaneously socked him in the chest and said don't ever do that. He fell out of the side of the jeep, cried his eyes out, and never repeated that mistake.

His Mom worked nights as a food and beverage manager for banquets; he would see her at lunch when she brought him hot lunch even when she had only a few hours sleep. She would be leaving for work when he came home from school. He is grateful for the woman who did everything she could to provide opportunity. He feels she gave him and his brother every opportunity and always wanted them to be better off than she. She was an extremely hard worker and James has paid her the highest compliment by conducting his life in the same way.

One moment that had a great impact was during the first week of college; his Mom gave him a \$2500 check. She told him she wanted him to focus on school, not fuss over money because he was coming home weekends to work for rent. He said, "That was like a million dollars to me, she believed in me."

He felt very fortunate to spend as much time with his grandfather as he did, which was till the end, as it was never an option to put someone in the rest home. He feels the same way about his grandmother.

His grandpa, James Tarap, was called the Don of Capell Valley, legendary to the grandson he picked up from school every day. At his funeral in 2013, he called him a grandfather, friend, parent, teacher, role model, and hero who inspired him greatly.

What he remembers is his grandpa's smile, big belly, famous quotes, and happy demeanor . . . a man who expected a handshake or kiss, took an interest in everyone, and gave everyone a chance. James sums up his life as a glass not half empty or half full, but a glass overflowing with love. He feels his grandpa walks every day with him as well; he has a tattoo down one leg with the date of his birth and the date of his death.



He is certain he will never forget who he is or where he came from. Financial means were a big consideration to him growing up, and he always looked for a good deal and worked hard for it. He remains the same and is putting that knowledge to work on behalf of our GCA members. He is very creative, so stay tuned – he has already bagged some big deals!



CANADIAN CORRESPONDENT

DANA DELESOY

Why I Decided To Take Up SHOOTING . . .

In the next few issues, we will take a look back at how Dana went from where he was, to where he is now and the chain of events along the way. In this issue, he tells us about the decision to take up shooting.

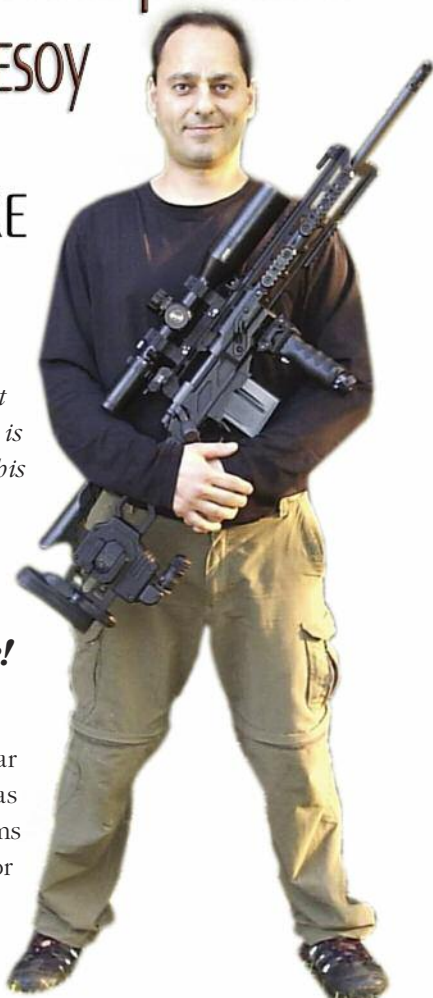
Firearms in Canada— no guns for self defense here!

A person can only remain caged at home for so long until there needs to be some kind of regular retreat to break the mundane cycle of it all. I was banking money so I decided to look into firearms for the sake of survival should I chose to hunt or shoot targets.

At that time, to become a firearms owner in Canada, you needed to challenge the Canadian Firearms Safety Course and successfully pass. This course is for non-restricted firearms: rifles with barrels no less than 18.5" and shotguns. This consists of paying a \$75 fee for which you get the course book. You can take the written and hands-on safe handling test immediately if you are already familiar with it all or study the course and take the written and hands-on test when you feel competent to do so.

A second course, called the Canadian Firearms Restricted Safety Course, must be successfully completed to possess restricted firearms. The process is exactly the same as the non-restricted course. Restricted guns are: handguns (with barrels over 4"), AR-15s and any other type of short barreled rifle under 18.5".

Mind you, AR-15s are restricted no matter how long the barrel is - it can be over 18.5" but it is still classified as restricted. I may have missed a point or two but this will give you an idea of the basic laws that govern firearms here. There is also a prohibited class but it is a "grandfathered" process and is not a course of its own. For example, a handgun with a barrel length of under 4" is classified as prohibited.



The process after passing the courses:

I had no idea whatsoever about guns so I studied the courses for weeks until confident to take the test. The most difficult part was not having a single gun around while learning about the safety aspects of them, although I did pass first go around.

Upon passing, the paperwork is sent from the instructor to the Chief Firearms Officer of your province of residence for their review/checks: criminal records, background checks, references from people who have known you for at least 5 years, etc.

If you've ever been a convicted criminal, are mentally "unsound," or declare you want guns for self defense (a BIG NO-NO! in Canada), etc. your application to possess firearms will be declined. Canadians are absolutely not allowed to possess firearms for self defense. If you say this is what you want them for you will never be allowed to own a firearm. This is why I and other Canadians say "firearms" versus Americans calling them "weapons."

I was never a criminal and such and was therefore granted the opportunity to be a responsible firearms owner. This became my "get outta the house and do something different to keep my sanity" hobby, so to speak.

Acquiring my first gun:

A friend who was also getting involved with firearms began a quest for guns to purchase so we made this a beer night with a "good cause." His search found "Marstar - Home of the \$75 SKS" at marstar.com. I liked the write up " . . . a Chinese assault rifle . . ." etc. Then upon phoning the salesman I asked if these are good guns and he said "I have sold over 6000 of these guns in the past year." SOLD! So with that said, in 2012, I acquired my first gun - an SKS.

It actually was advertised as a gun/ammo combo (1200 rounds)

stating the gun was \$75 of the package deal. The postage fee of \$142 to get it all here from back east was not explained by the salesman. He just stated the gun/ammo price, got my credit card # and ran it all through. I did not realize the postage cost until I received the invoice. I guess he assumed I should know better. I still cringe at this now and again. Live and learn.



SKS on Hyscore in Ft McMurray:



Me and the little .50 at Ft McMurray centerfire range

Range time: the first days:

After the purchase of my gun I joined the Fort McMurray Fish and Game Association. It is a \$200/year membership fee which grants access to the shooting range. When my gun arrived I was ready and able to take it out. I was leery about firing the gun because of what a neighbor told me about them when I got talking to him. He heard the occasional SKS has been known to burst the barrel when first fired. He recommended I fire the gun from the hip so if it blows up it won't damage my face. Not knowing any better, I heeded his

daunting warning. Being cautious

I bought a Hyscore shooting rest that a gun can be mounted on, strapped in and fired distantly by depressing a large syringe that has a long "linkage" which pulls the trigger. Better safe than sorry.

The gun did not blow up, so, from then on I shot it the normal way. After getting a taste of shooting I was craving range time each day but had to limit it to one or maybe two days a week at best. The shooting sport quickly became the *funnest* and most interesting hobby I've engaged in. I met a few very interesting gun enthusiasts during times at the range. One fellow in particular comes to mind as he let me pose with his "little .50" as he calls it.

He generously offered me a chance to shoot it but this was just a few weeks after a severe back injury at work. I had just gotten back on my feet and was still in much pain. I was off work, in rehab, so sadly I declined the offer and stuck to my "plinking gun." I will admit I was a bit nervous about the thought of shooting his gun anyhow.

The range is simple but liberating compared to what others are available in Alberta. What I mean by liberating is the distances available to shoot out to. Most licensed shooting ranges in Alberta are what I consider "sight-in ranges": 100-200 yards and nothing more. The reason for lack of distance is land is either government owned or privately owned and in both cases used primarily for agriculture. I relocated a while back and did not realize this until on the search for a new shooting range.

If you get to know a land owner you may have a shot at about the same distances as "typical" licensed ranges: 100-200 yards. In Fort McMurray I guess I got "spoilt". The centerfire rifle range had berms at approximate yardages of 25, 50, 100, 185, 200, 313, 416, 560 and 1000. The 1000 yard was closed soon after I became a member due to new provincial regulations.

I have never really been a picture person. Most of the ones I took of the range I looked at for some time, then deleted from my phone. I did keep one which gives a slight background view of the centerfire range as described above with my Benelli MR1 catching some rays in the foreground.



My Benelli MR1 at the Ft. McMurray centerfire range above. The .22 rimfire range is shown to your left.

The range had several handgun sections of about 15 yards distance. Unfortunately I cannot find any pictures. There is a trap and skeet range but I was not into shotguns at the time so I have no pics of that either. My favorite shooting areas were the

centerfire rifle range and the .22 rimfire rifle range. The .22 rimfire range has a maximum distance of 100 yards with a few target backdrops at varying ranges.

Eventually I was introduced to salvaging spent brass cartridges. People threw so much in the garbage buckets at the centerfire rifle range that one time a friend and I managed to find 31 pounds of various brass in a matter of an hour or less. Dozens of 300 win mag, 300 Rem Ultra mag, 7mm rem mag, 270 short mag, .308, etc. .223 was by far the most abundant of all spent brass lying around on the ground.



Here is a picture of some common brass found laying around at the range. Did I get your imagination running wild? The big brass cartridge I borrowed from my buddy to throw into the mix for a laugh.

Salvaging of brass soon became a challenge to see how much I could find during trips to the range. At first I felt like a "garbage picker" especially when others were around as I hit up every bucket on the lot. I told this to my friend who got me into this. He flat out said "Brass is a precious metal. Don't be embarrassed in any way. You are doing a good service." I was only looking in buckets filled with shot out paper targets, coffee mugs, cigarette wrappers, etc. to get to the spent brass. I gave all my findings to this friend and he gave me ammo for my guns in return. It worked out really well for the both of us and I still have something to show for it to this day.

Hunting Volunteers



If you have never hunted before, and want to, programs in your state may be the best place to start for instruction in what is required. We spoke with Robert Gaudet, President of the Nevada Wildlife Federation (NVWF) and a Hunter Education instructor for the State of Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) who outlined the program available in Nevada.

Programs often rely on volunteer instructors who have a drive to share that information with others, backed up by years of practical experience. Robert has been a volunteer instructor for the NDOW for almost 25 years, teaching hunter, angler, and archery classes. In the hunter safety portion, he teaches black powder, .22 cal rifle, shotgun, and archery. All the instructors are volunteers—in the southern section alone where he instructs they currently have 87 volunteers.

Within the southern section, Robert says, “We taught over 120 classes last year, most are 8 hours. The size of the average class is 20-30 students, all ages, and it costs you \$5 to cover the materials. If you’re under 16, you have to take the hunter education class and be certified, written and practical with the weapons.” A license year here runs from March 1st to the end of February.

Prior to taking the certification test, each student must pick up free copies of the *Today’s Hunter Manual* to study and the *Today’s Hunter Workbook* at NDOW. The workbook needs to be completely filled out, questions answered, and brought to class—all the answers can be found in the manual. You have the option to complete the written portion of the workbook online, but there is an additional fee of approximately \$25.

The class certification portion deals with real firearms, the firing pins have been altered so they can’t fire. The firearms are pump, bolt action, break open, lever action, and semi auto shotguns, and semi-auto rifles. Every student handles each one, to become familiar with how they work and the feel of carrying one. The student completes an exercise which shows knowledgeable use of the weapon. “We teach you the practical, how to handle the gun, how to walk a trail, and we teach ethics and the “fair chase” principles.”

The Annual Nevada Big Game Seasons and Application Regulations Manual, however, tells you where you can hunt, what type of weapon to use in what seasons, which big game tags are available in designated areas, etc. Each student receives a card upon completion of the class and passing the test which is used to purchase a hunting license. Once your card number has been entered into NDOW’s online database, it is good in all states.

“A licensed hunter can hunt upland game, quail, pheasant, chukar, and rabbits without a tag,” he said. “Big game species such as sheep, elk, antelope, mule deer, mountain lion, and bear require a tag.”

Robert was born in Los Angeles, and learned on his own as didn't have anyone to teach him how to hunt or fish. He became a volunteer to help others get a start. He taught a 6 -7 year old blind girl how to fish, and he experienced her joy when she pulled up a 2 pound trout—this was the first person he taught and he was hooked. He has taught kids of all ages. What started as a volunteer job 25 years ago turned into becoming the president of the Nevada Wildlife Federation.

He recalls a sponsored program years ago for women only which was free to them, called The Diana Project. Experienced mentors taught women all they needed to know about the outdoors: how to maneuver a 4-wheel drive vehicle, make a camp, build a latrine, shoot different types of weapons, and how to clean fish and field dress big game. What Mr. Gaudet remembers most is that, “It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had, especially when one of the women got a hunting tag because I'd get to take them on their first hunt.”

Being able to use the outdoors inevitably hinges on land use. He believes land use should stay at the federal level as that is where the assets were originally purchased. Much of the federal land given to states has been sold off. He said 2 1/2 million acres were granted to Nevada, only a few thousand are left because the state sold them. He mentioned 90% of land in Texas is privately owned. How does this affect hunters? You have to pay to hunt on private land as landowners typically post “NO hiker, biker, birdwatcher, camper, hunter” signs. Robert states “Nowhere else has wide open spaces the public can use like America offers.” He clearly works to keep this land available to hunters and the rest of the public to use, through his efforts and education. He mentions Bob Rees, a sixth-generation Oregonian, a fishing guide and executive director of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders, one of the oldest conservation organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

Here is a portion of what Bob Rees recently said, which tells you why you want to make sure this right continues to exist:

“There's nothing more American than our national public lands, where people of all means and backgrounds can hunt, fish, paddle, camp, bike and watch wildlife. The public lands belong to all Americans, not just those who live nearby. They are managed for many purposes, including sustaining the fish and wildlife populations that make this country the envy of the world.”

Keep in mind that even though you are in the outdoors and out in the middle of nowhere, there are rules of etiquette to observe. The “Leave No Trace” Center for Outdoor Ethics lists 7 principles, which can be found at www.LNT.org and we show them below also. Leave No Trace also has a free online awareness course on their website under the “Learn” tab, which takes about 30-60 minutes to complete. It is sponsored by the USDA Forest Service.

You will find equally compelling info on your state’s website. Become educated before you go on what is expected from you. In some cases, you might do something that seems fine to you at the time, but would be considered rude by people hoping to preserve the land for future generations. And in some cases, what you thought was fine could be illegal for reasons you might not think of, for example, driving an ATV off a trail.

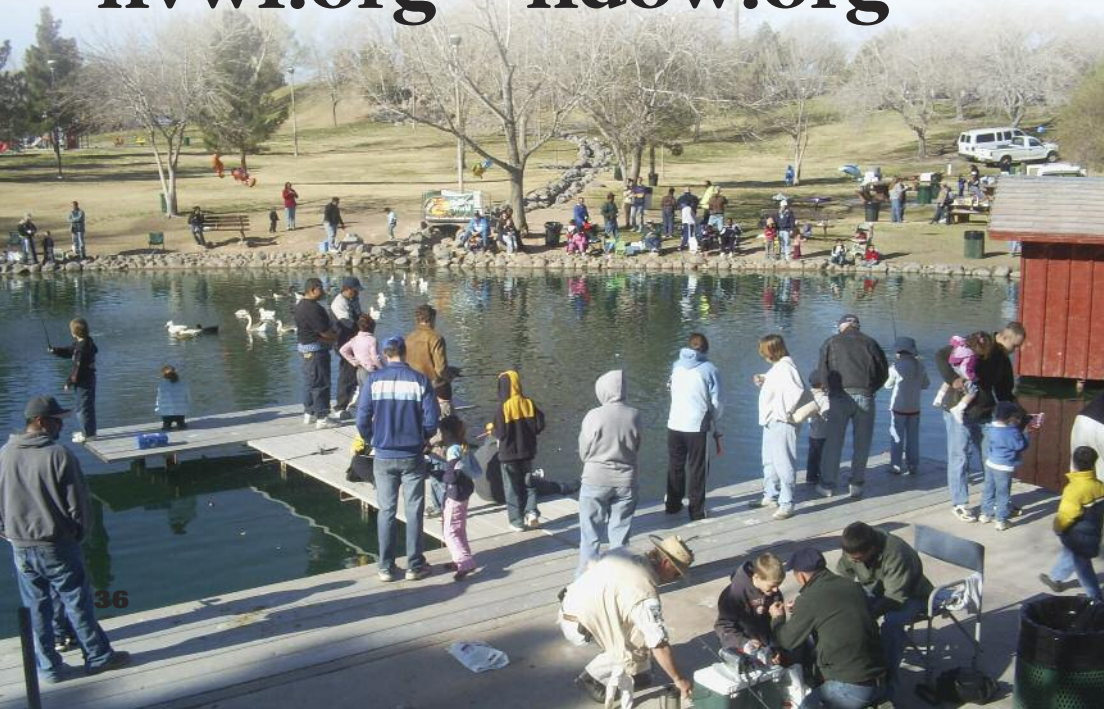
Education is always a powerful tool, bringing up likely situations and letting you know how to most effectively deal with it. Thankfully, the state volunteer instructors are there to pass on tips so you don’t have to learn something the hard way. The goal, after all, is that you and I, and our families benefit from our time spent in the great outdoors.

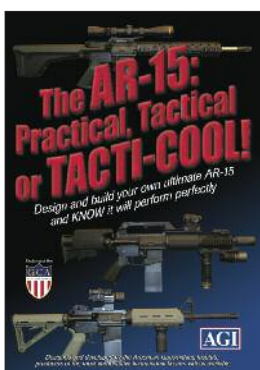
These programs not only have volunteers teach hunting, they may be hunting volunteers with these skills. Maybe you want to pass on your experience through just such a program. Robert Gaudet can tell you, it is much appreciated.

Leave No Trace Principles

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

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Lieutenant Colonel Charles Kettles

MEDAL OF HONOR

VIETNAM WAR

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT: Lt. Col. Charles Kettles

We believe it is important for people to know the history of those fighting in the US military, as we are the beneficiaries of their protection of this country, the Constitution, and Bill of Rights. It is uplifting to take a look at the unflinching courage that some display to do the right thing, no matter the cost. It is how kids learn that possibilities are endless, and they don't live in a vacuum. They learn about the code of honor: this is what it means when they say "no man left behind."

We also know there are many unsung heroes in these ranks, which makes it even more important to appreciate those we know about.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHARLES KETTLES previously received both the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions on May 14, 1967, and the Distinguished Service Cross for actions on May 15, 1967.

William Vollano of the Veteran's History Project in 2012 campaigned for his Distinguished Service Cross awarded for May 15 to be upgraded to the Medal of Honor, an effort urged on by letters from his unit and the 101st Airborne. He will be the recipient of the Medal of Honor in July 2016.

His reaction: "There wasn't any decision to be made. We simply were going to go and pick them up," Charles Kettles told reporters inside a Michigan



National Guard building in his hometown of Ypsilanti, according to the Daily Mail.

"It's certainly a great honor, but nothing will upstage the fact that we got 44 men out of there," Kettles said during the news conference. "That award belongs to some 74 helicopter crew members, each of whom were requested to do their job. They did that and then some."

Below is an account of the two incidents, the second which is the basis for the Medal of Honor.

Distinguished Flying Cross, for heroism while participating in aerial flight as evidenced by voluntary action above and beyond the call of duty:

On May 14, 1967, he was then a Major and the Aircraft Commander for one of the two UH1D helicopters in the area of Duc Pho to extract a LRRP (long range recon patrol) team of 6 men who were in a heavily infested Viet Cong stronghold. The LRRP team was an hour and a half from a suitable landing zone and a B52 bombing of the area was to occur within minutes. The Major had no radio contact with ground personnel or the US Air Force. The LRRP team was being pursued by the enemy.

Major Kettles made the decision to extract the team then and there, lowering over tall trees, into a bomb crater. There was a tall tree standing in the way, and the LRRPs shot at it while the helicopter tried to mow it down with rotor wash, but all efforts failed.

The hour for the B52 strike passed, and could happen anytime, but he made the decision to remain to get these men out. He had his crew take off their safety straps and hook them together, lowering them, but the men on the ground couldn't climb them successfully.

Major Kettles threw back his armor plating and hung out the window to demonstrate what they needed to do to tie the straps around them and use them as a sling. He extracted the first man, took him 6000 meters away, and came back for the second and did the same. He then marked the spot so a second helicopter could come in and assist with completing the extraction. It was successful and completed minutes before the B52 strike occurred.

Distinguished Service Cross, for extraordinary heroism, in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force. This event occurred a day after the incident above, on May 15, 1967.

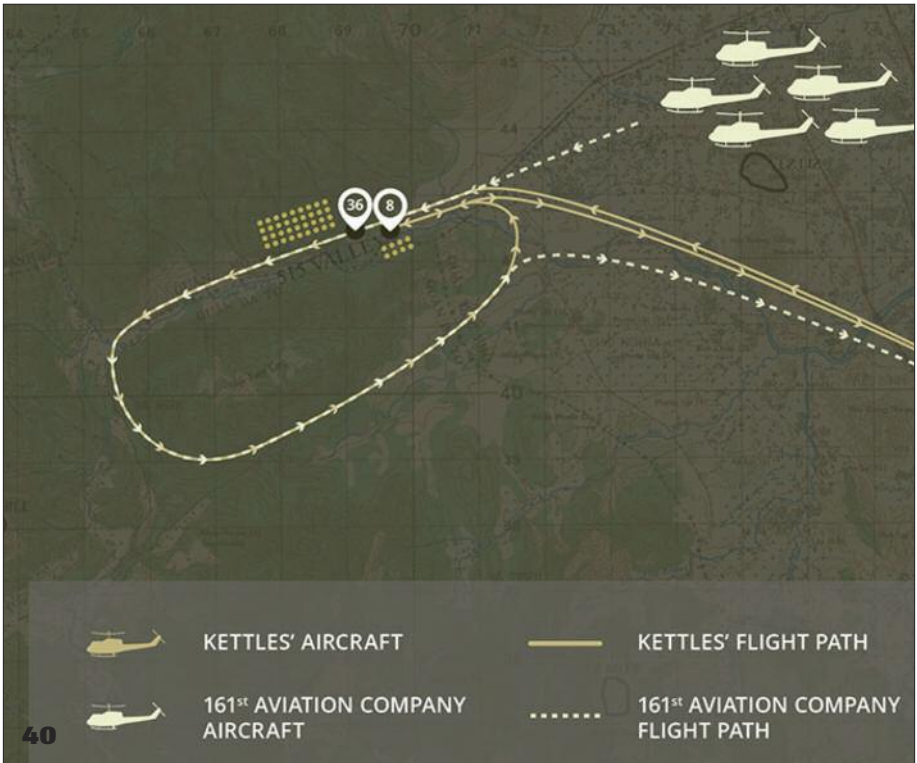
The major was aircraft commander for a helicopter, again near Duc Pho, and supporting an airborne infantry team under enemy attack. They had suffered casualties, and Major Kettles volunteered to evacuate their wounded and bring in reinforcements. He led a flight of helicopters through a barrage of small arms and automatic weapons fire, and they were heavily damaged but he refused to leave before all the wounded were loaded.

Following is the official account of the battle on the Army’s website, where there is additional information about the unit and its missions.
<https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/kettles/>

THE BATTLE

May 15, 1967 | Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam | Song Tra Cau riverbed
During the early morning hours of May 15, 1967, personnel of the 1st Brigade,

The satellite image of the Song Tra Cau riverbed, near Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam. The graphic overlay depicts then-Maj. Charles Kettles flight path during the emergency extraction, May 15, 1967, as part of Operation Malheur.



101st Airborne Division, were ambushed in the Song Tra Cau riverbed by an estimated battalion-sized force of the North Vietnamese army with numerous automatic weapons, machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles. The enemy force fired from a fortified complex of deeply embedded tunnels and bunkers, and was shielded from suppressive fire.

Upon learning that the 1st Brigade had suffered casualties during an intense firefight with the enemy, then-Major Charles S. Kettles, volunteered to lead a flight of six UH-1D helicopters to carry reinforcements to the embattled force and to evacuate wounded personnel. As the flight approached the landing zone, it came under heavy enemy attack. Deadly fire was received from multiple directions and soldiers were hit and killed before they could leave the arriving lift helicopters.

"We got the 44 out. None of those names appear on the wall in Washington. There's nothing."

Jets dropped napalm and bombs on the enemy machine guns on the ridges overlooking the landing zone, with minimal effect. Small arms and automatic weapons fire continued to rake the landing zone, inflicting heavy damage to the helicopters. However, Kettles refused to depart until all reinforcements and supplies were off-loaded and wounded personnel were loaded on the helicopters to capacity. Kettles led them out of the battle area and back to the staging area to pick up additional reinforcements.

Kettles then returned to the battlefield, with full knowledge of the intense enemy fire awaiting his arrival. Bringing reinforcements, he landed in the midst of enemy mortar and automatic weapons fire that seriously wounded his gunner and severely damaged his aircraft. Upon departing, Kettles was advised by another helicopter crew that he had **fuel streaming out of his aircraft**. Despite the risk posed by the leaking fuel, he nursed the damaged aircraft back to base.

Later that day, the infantry battalion commander **requested immediate, emergency extraction of the remaining 40 troops**, and four members of Kettles' unit who were stranded when their helicopter was destroyed by enemy fire. With only one flyable UH-1 helicopter remaining, Kettles volunteered to return to the deadly landing zone for a third time, leading a flight of six evacuation helicopters, five of which were from the 161st Aviation Company. During the extraction, Kettles was informed by the last helicopter that all personnel were onboard, and departed the landing zone accordingly. Army gunships supporting the evacuation also departed the area.

Once airborne, Kettles was advised that eight troops had been **unable to reach the evacuation helicopters** due to the intense enemy fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, Kettles passed the lead to another helicopter and returned to the landing zone to rescue the remaining troops.



176th Aviation Company Huey Helicopters drop off 101st Airborne Soldiers during Operation Wheeler, 1967. Operation Wheeler took place shortly after Operation Malheur I, which then-Maj. Charles Kettles took part in. (Photos courtesy of U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Vietnam War Photograph Collection)

Without gunship, artillery, or tactical aircraft support, the enemy concentrated all firepower on his lone aircraft, which was immediately damaged by a mortar round that damaged the tail



boom, a main rotor blade, shattered both front windshields and the chin bubble and was further raked by small arms and machine gun fire.

Despite the intense enemy fire, Kettles maintained control of the aircraft and situation, allowing time for the remaining eight Soldiers to board the aircraft. In spite of the severe damage to his helicopter, Kettles once more skillfully guided his heavily damaged aircraft to safety. Without his courageous actions and superior flying skills, the last group of Soldiers and his crew would never have made it off the battlefield.

Thank you Lt. Col. Kettles - it is people like you we think of when we think of America.

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Charles Kettles poses in front of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Ypsilanti Township, Michigan, 2009.

(Photo courtesy of Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Charles Kettles)





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Where's Your Flag?



That simple question was a beacon for one of our combat soldiers who forged a new path for himself, his fellow craftsman, and his family. It's a question you may be asking yourself . . .

I have always been of the mind that if you serve your country, if you have volunteered for a job in which losing your life physically, or losing life as you know it is a possibility, the country owes a debt to you. Period.

The reality I have seen is rules change, promises go the way of the forgotten, and time slips by, leaving a wounded combat veteran to fend for himself, without the strong framework of expectation, motivation, and service. Unacceptable. What is amazing is how many combat veterans just don't quit, their eye on what's at stake steady, often unspoken. For some, it is a lonely burden that becomes too much, for others, plunging forward is the only option.

This is the story of a man who goes forward, and the company that is in step with him. Brian Steorts is the president and owner of Flags of Valor, a company with a clear vision. It is a company whose product is Made in America by combat veterans. That statement covers its two major principles: The product is the American flag, painted on wood with commitment and purpose, with size and permanence. There is something about the heft of the wood that contributes to the artistry, and brings back the best permanent memories of being an American.

The "never quit, leave no man behind" military background infuses this operation with the compass it needs to carry through on their mission. At the heart of this effort is the use of the skills of combat veterans, some service disabled, and heart is the operative word: to create art, you need passion. His team has very strong feelings about the flag, having already demonstrated

that through the lives they have lived. He knows he can rely on his team's efforts. They know they can rely on him: if it is one of those days you come to work and don't feel like talking to anyone, you can put on your headphones. No discussion needed. Circumstances understood.



Brian Steorts, founder of Flags of Valor

The genesis of this idea came from service: Brian was an infantryman in the 82nd Airborne, then went to the University of Alabama, and joined the Air Force after the events of 9/11. He became a Special Ops pilot and served 8 consecutive deployments to the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. The pursuit of what would become Flags of Valor evolved as he went through rehabilitation, from being very active, to being patient, bearing pain, and striving to regain as much as possible with a refusal to be mired down.

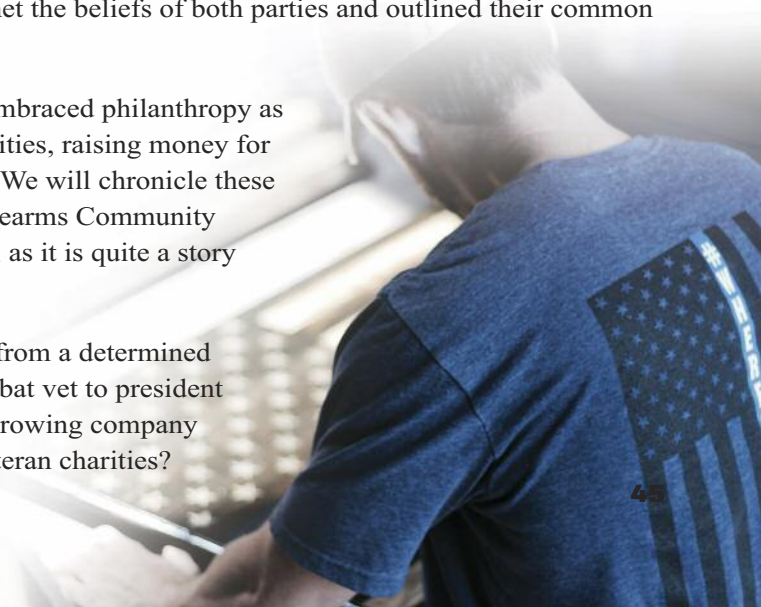
He had been in a world where flags, challenge coins, everything motivated and reinforced service, and that was no longer the case. At this point, he began asking himself “where’s my flag?” Where’s my life? How can I serve?

He began woodworking, painting, talking to the older ladies at the craft store, asking questions at the hardware store. He was not enamored with his first efforts, and kept at it, determined to become better. He gave some flags away, then people asked to buy them. Determination and perseverance had forged his efforts into art and with the help of one of his best friends, he laid the foundation for a company. Flags of Valor started last October and has just hired its 5th employee.

Brian saw opportunity in places many would not have noticed. Using DeWalt tools in the shop, he noticed some of them were not made in America and took the step of writing the company. The company responded and outfitted the whole Flags of Valor workshop with their “Made in America” line of tools which met the beliefs of both parties and outlined their common ground.

Flags of Valor also embraced philanthropy as one of its responsibilities, raising money for numerous charities. (We will chronicle these efforts in a future Firearms Community Gives Back segment, as it is quite a story on its own.)

What has taken him from a determined service disabled combat vet to president and owner of a fast growing company that also supports veteran charities?



The key is evident in some of the statements he has made:

- Love what you do and work to improve it
- Persevere, no matter what
- Develop a strong network
- Be grateful for everyone's contributions along the way
- Learn from each encounter
- Your passion for the journey must exceed your desire to make money
- Obstacles aren't dead-ends -- there is always another option

There is an Old Glory collection and a Betsy Ross collection. The flags are named for events, wars, people and come in four different sizes. We show some of them here, and on the back cover of this issue. You can view them all at:

FlagsofValor.com

Where's your flag? It is a question that can make you search for your immediate purpose, to find a path that makes a difference to you and others, and remind you what matters. Or it can be just that, a question . . . and that is one I can answer here.

By the time you read this, my flag will be in the mail, or more accurately at UPS. Though I really want one on my wall, my first order will go to my Marine son-in-law, now deployed, as a welcome home present. It is the perfect expression of acknowledging that which is important enough to take him away from his wife and kids; a thank you which I believe the young Marines who congregate at their home will feel as a consistent tether, and as a thank you and reminder to the family why Dad is sometimes gone.

It also tells Brian and his craftsman there is appreciation and support for the path they've chosen, still serving our country.

*All photographs in this article provided by
Chris Coppock Photography*



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Page 44