



Reload!

The Newsletter of the Connecticut Travelers

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© Phil Steinkraus, Editor

RUSS TAGLIARENI AND STEFANIE STEINKRAUS SHARE HOA HONORS

By Phil Steinkraus

One of the many benefits of shooting with Travelers is that the monthly events start to act as a kind of internal annual clock. The Tax Time Revolt is a time of greenery and new beginnings. The Great Eastern Lobster Classic reminds us of a lazy day at the beach. The upcoming Labor Day weekend marks the real end of summer and the beginning of you regaining you sanity whilst the young guns again start serving hard time in front of the black board!

CTSCA's Septemberschutzenfest held at Millbrook Rod and Gun (this year's event was contested on Sunday September 17th) always reminds me of a harvest festival. The greenery has now turned to "brownery" and is doomed to take its flight on some breezy fall night just days off. We sportsmen hear the siren's call of Diana, goddess of the hunt, beckoning us into wood and covert, abandoning that long-suffering spouse until its time for Christmas shopping. Septemberschutzenfest is the only event we enjoy at Millbrook R&G and its once-a-year status combined with one of the best woods courses in the area makes this event all the more special.

Favorite stations included a true pair of incomers from separate traps nearly at the same spot across a marsh. One had a flat, right-to-left trajectory, the other a high climber on-edge that after it stalled, started to tank on a bowed descent. The only way I had any success here was to pop the flat target right off the arm and then sit back and put my feet up, waiting for the stalling bird to develop.

Another true pair gave us two standards from the right. One target was a straight-on outgoer the other crossed the clearing diagonally and behind an awkwardly-placed tree where it started to lose altitude. I tried this presentation every which way, shooting the longer, back bird first and then trying to run down the crosser (too big a move for me without resetting my feet!) Then I tried the crosser first, shooting it quickly from a premount (this only invited bad spot-shooting). Nothing really seemed to work well.

My candidate for hardest station gave us another true pair with a similar flavor: A straight-on outgoer and a quartering, right-to-left screamer. I tried this both ways, as did my wife and the rest of the squad, and no one shot it well. I admire course design that asks you to read targets and use judgment, and I'm quite sure that you could have put Digweed or Faulds on this station and they would have killed the pair both ways with time left to spare. For us mortals however, that wasn't a likely scenario. I suppose that what made this pair so difficult was its simo-stays. If you could have simply taken your time on each bird as a report pair, it was probably runnable, but the added difficulty of that true pair in the air introduced a choppy timing that most of us are uncomfortable with.

Having said that, however, there was one true pair that really was effectively employed and that was station one: A four-pair-station of right-to-left, low crossers. All this presentation asked of a shooter was to be consistent: Kill them in the same spot, in the same way four times in a row. I couldn't do it, although the wife and that young punk Slome straightened this!

Our last station was my favorite. The high arching rabbit chandelle followed on report by a simple right-to-left crosser. This again asked a shooter to be consistent. There was a definite timing element at play here and many a shooter, I would dare say, accentuated more and more the positive attributes of a winning technique that had resulted in a cleanly killed target, until said target began to be chipped and then lost altogether. You shoot faster, slower or try to be more precise and always, it seems, you start missing.

A big hand goes to Lavert Cypher who set these targets and made sure we got something different than last year's course. I always say, it doesn't take a great shooter to set great targets, but it doesn't hurt! Thank you, Lavert.

You can never tell when history is about to be made or by whom, but as the scores were coming and I was stealing my monthly five-minute editorial conference with El Presidente, Al Anglace, he mentioned that a Travelers shoot had only once been won by a woman. That woman was the incomparable Denise Losty, one of the best woman shooters in the country back in the 1990's and a gunner that Travelers claimed as our own home-grown world-beater. But alas, Denise left the game (If you're reading this Denise, why don't you come pay us a visit some time. There are still plenty of us around who remember you and await your second coming.)

When the scores were finally tallied, Russ Tagliareni—who won this event going away last year, got to share the High-Over-All honors with Stefanie Steinkraus, my wife, the New York State Ladies Champion and the high lady scorer at this year's National FITASC Championship—German girls—even if they're married to American--can't be US National Champions. Both scored 82 and I offer historic sized congratulations to both winners.

HOA		Russ Tagliareni	82
RU/Ladies Champ.		Stefanie Steinkraus	82
Ladies	RU	Edie Ellis	63
	3 rd	Valerie Hovosapian	60
Jun.	Ch.	Ben Slome	69
	RU	Mike Griffin	45
	3 rd	Andrew Holmes	37

Vet	Ch.	Doug Moore	75
	RU	John Lawlor	66
	3 rd	Paul Cahan	60
Sen.Vet	Ch.	Kurt Willinger	79
	RU	Martin Schroeder	73
	3 rd	Ron Leonardi	67
Cl.1	Ch.	Jim Kline	78
	RU	George Ostrander	70
	3 rd	Mark Steiner	69
Cl.2	Ch.	Tom Gansowski	80
	RU	Ralph Lowery	74
	3 rd	Ed Shine	74
Cl.3	Ch.	Warren Lambert	74
	RU	George Parsons	73
	3 rd	George Masek	68
Cl.4	Ch.	Rich Palmeri	68
	RU	Hank Drapou	63
	3 rd	Robert Markarian	63
Cl.5	Ch.	David Waldo	69
	RU	Robert Holtzman	64
	3 rd	Olive Lawlor	59
Cl.6	Ch.	Les Carter	66
	RU	Bill Hawley	44
	3 rd	Susan Hachman	27

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR CTSCA MEMBERSHIP

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Connecticut Travelers and we invite you to show the love by renewing your membership and paying you dues. You help us all by doing this quickly (right now).

Please send your \$60 (\$70 for family membership) renewal using the coupon enclosed with this issue of RELOAD. Of course, you should correct the coupon with any changes to the information listed.

Again, you help the volunteers by renewing quickly this month and by using the coupon. If you renew with one check for both the upcoming shoot and dues, please enclose the coupon along with your registration form.

And, for all our sakes, please heed our demands and just do it now!!!

CLUB HISTORIAN

By John M. Hachmann

This historian is getting old. New blood is needed in the Historian's office at the Reload Complex. I am running out of ideas on how to write this column every month. Hey you--yes YOU. How 'bout stepping up to the plate. This is your club, make it something special! Do something to improve it. Even if it's not an improvement, it's still something new and different. Grab the bull by the horns and try it for a year. After that it will be someone else's turn. Start lining up today, donate a few precious moments each month. Help me, help Phil and Stephanie--help the Travelers. Everyone wants to get the newsletter, everyone wants to shoot the different courses, everyone wants to socialize and meet new friends who share their enthusiasm for our sport, but nobody wants to take a few minutes a month to get involved

The 2006 CT Travelers Small Gauge Championship is scheduled to take place at Fairfield County Fish & Game on October 15th, 2006. Our usual "Small Gauge" handicaps will help all of our scores; an additional 3 points for 16-gauge, 5 points for 20-gauge, 10 points for 28-gauge and 15 points for the .410 bore shooters. Pumps and Side-By-Side shooters will also get the usual additional points.

Looking back to 1996, I see attendances between 110 and 150 shooters--Great turnouts. This shows that we, the CT Travelers are truly sportsman and women, and eager to step up to the challenge of deliberately handicapping ourselves, deliberately allowing our prey, the little orange disk, or whatever may be flying on a particular day, an additional advantage. We can predict a great turnout each year for the "Small Gauge" shoot because of this "Sportsmanship" and due to our hosts' fantastic effort that we all overwhelmingly appreciate. Weather conditions on the other hand are something that nobody can predict--especially not this time of year. October can be crisp in the morning and uncomfortably warm during the day. In past years we have seen October weather vary from humid, to Surprisingly cool, to rain and even clear blue skies. We've had it all. This is a great time of the year to be outside, but only if you're properly

dressed. Pay attention to the weather forecast in the days prior to the shoot. Prepare yourself and you will have a great day no matter what Mother Nature throws our way. Just remember that October is typically one of the nicest months so come on out and join your fellow Travelers for this superb event.

Jimmy Muller won this event last year with an adjusted score of 97. In last November's Reload I listed the HOA winners from 1996 until 2004, this year lets take a look at the Class 3 winners in the annual Small Gauge Championships. I chose Class 3 because there are more Class 3 shooters in the CT Travelers than Class 1, 2 or 4.

Nov. '96, Indian Mtn, Cl 3 1st ...**Mike Greco** 87
 Sept. '97, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st **Carl Bender** shooting a .410 SxS scored a 79
 Sept. '98, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st **Mike Lindsay-Stuart** with a score of 79
 Sept. '99, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st **Tom Gransowski** with a score of 91
 Sept. '00, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st **Jeremy Willinger** with a score of 92
 Sept. '01, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st **John Nicoletti** shooting a 28 Ga. scored 85
 Sept. '02, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st **Mike Steiner** shooting a 20 Ga. scored 89
 Sept. '03, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st ...**Paul Ragusa** shooting a 28 gauge, scored 84
 Sept. '04, Fairfield F&G, Cl 3 1st ...**M.I.A.** – **What happened to my records?**
 Oct. '05, Fairfield County F&G, Cl 3 1st place... **Don Brenton** with a score of 84

There it is. I have said enough. The scores now speak the words. Best of luck to everyone at the Sub-Gauge Championships and see you on the 15th.

THE VINTAGE CUP

By Ben Slome

The Vintagers 2006 World Side-By-Side Championship was held Sunday, September 24, at Orvis Sandanona in Millbrook, NY. There were dozens of spectacular firearms vendors to choose from with some of the most jaw-droppingly-gorgeous shotguns you could ever

imagine. With a hundred and six competitors mostly dressed in “Ye’ old style attire” the atmosphere was like being back in the 1800’s with some costumes that were just incredible in their authenticity. Shoot day was overcast and gloomy; with two rotations going off at nine o’clock and noon.

I found some of the stations on the course to be a little difficult to maneuver. For example, the station entitled “Stonewall” had a right-to-left rising crosser, with a standard flying on report from right-to-left almost directly over your head--to your left was a small tree that stopped you from shooting the target later rather than sooner. If you were a left-handed shooter like former Team USA FITASC shooter, Paula Moore you had to “Stretch your body out of the stand,” just so you could have a chance at breaking that target. But other than that one station the majority of presentations were very straightforward. In my opinion, the best were thirteen and seven. Thirteen, the station my squad started on, had a report pair of standards going right-to-left, about 30 yards away from the shooter. They came out of a grouping of trees and were really not shootable until they were just about to drop into the scrub. You literally had two or three seconds to make a good move, mount and shoot, otherwise you lost the pair. My second favorite station was station seven, where you had a report pair of screaming midis’s going left to right. We’ve all had experience with these kinds of birds but the problem that my whole squad and I encountered was there was no real line you could consistently follow. The targets were flying parallel to a hill so they looked as though they were rising, but it was made clear after the first pair that they actually were not. Every shot you made was really a sort of guessing game. After these notables, the rest of the shoot was fun if not textbook presentations. After the shooting was done, everybody retreated back to the exhibitor’s tent to have a couple of coronas and joke around with their companions, waiting for the award ceremony to begin. I on the other hand got roughed up by New York state Championship target setter Steve Liberta, but that is a story for another time! The day ended well for former World English Sporting Clays champion Mike Howells who claimed the title of World Side-By-

Side Champion and the Vintage Cup with an HOA score of 125, just three targets over last year’s Vintage Cup Champ, Chuck Devinne. I congratulate both of them on their truly world-class performances.

HOA		Mick Howells	125
Sen.	Ch.	Chuck Devinne	122
Ladies	Ch	Paula Moore	86
	RU	Suzie Clarke	86
	3 rd	Valerie Hovosapian	72
Vet.	Ch.	Jim Kline	107
	RU	Martin Schroeder	104
Jun		Ben Slome	94

THREE CLASSICAL TREATISES ON SHOTGUNNING TECHNIQUE

By Peter Hamilton

As I may have mentioned in a previous article, ninety-nine percent of my training with a shotgun was comprised of my Dad, and a few other guys repeating “keep your head down and follow through!” I also remember the advice “sweep over the target like a paintbrush!” to be helpful. These worked for most basic shots, and offered a great deal more satisfaction from far fewer practiced rudiments than golf did.

The first formal sporting clays instruction I had was from Bruce Bowlen at Orvis a couple of years ago. Bruce had written the Orvis shooting book and advocated what he referred to as the “instinctive method.” After pointing out that my gun was really better suited for a person with a growth hormone deficiency, he took me around the course and attempted to evaluate some of the bad habits that 35 years of hunting and casual target shooting had etched on my form. Somewhere along the way, he mentioned Robert Churchill’s legendary book, “Game Shooting”, which I had bought and half-read the year before. With some work on stance, target management, proper foot and barrel placement and increased target focus I was able to markedly improve by the end of the round.

Once Fairfield CT gunsmith Mitch Schultz had given the old Browning 325 a bend, and added about eight inches to the length of pull, I was able to have a couple of good days, and I actually won my class at a fun-shoot. Unfortunately, this run of success was short-lived and had been largely due to keeping my head

down and swinging through the target, combined with some very good course management advice from my squad: Unfortunately, very little of this advice stuck. It was obvious that some of my free time normally allotted to studying the “dismal science” of economics would have to be refocused on the more exacting science of pulverizing clay Frisbees. “Head down and follow through!” would never again have the same meaning for me.

It was obvious to me that it would be wise to try and best match my predispositions with one of the dominant shooting techniques and employ some more formal coaching and practice. Several books were suggested to me and the ones I found to be the best (the ones I read, that is) were “Shotgun Marksmanship” by Percy Stanbury, an extremely influential early instructor at the West London Shooting School and “Positive Shooting” by Michael Yardley who was a popular and much more recent instructor at the same institution. From what information I have, Stanbury and Churchill’s books formed the two pillars of modern shooting instruction, with Stanbury’s book holding up better in modern shooting applications. Yardley’s “Positive Shooting” method seems to be a synthesis of a variety of techniques, which I’ll explain later, but seems to have the Stanbury method as his foundation.

Stanbury (Keith Lupton's preferred book) recommends a fairly closed stance, with feet pointing at one and three o'clock to the kill spot. He also recommends keeping one's weight heavily forward on the ball of the front foot, even in the case of overhead shots. Unlike Churchill, Bidwell and many others, he recommends maintaining a sustained lead picture for a variety of presentations.

His method is also unique, in that it recommends tracking the path of target with the muzzle of the gun while bringing the butt to shoulder, which leads to a slight downward rotation of the gun to the target during the mount which, I’ve read elsewhere, can lead to low shots. He is consistent with many teachers, in terms of maintaining target focus regardless of the lead picture, with any focus on the barrel a sure way to stop swing and miss a target. His technique for most shots is summarized by focusing on the target, while maintaining a

subconscious lead picture, which is brought about by the “natural overthrow of the gun.” His method is neither swing-through nor pull-away, with the shot taken at the moment the stock comes to the cheek. He writes of a deliberate gun mount, which begins with the eye picking up the bird and the body pivoting with the muzzle tracks the target, ending with a “snap” as the shoulder meets the butt and the trigger is pulled. I’ve found his insistence on taking the shot at the moment of mount to be helpful in most low gun situations, particularly on some quartering targets, where chasing it will lose most targets. Churchill also recommends that the shooter finish with something like this tensing, or “snap”, advising that relaxing at the moment of shooting would surely result in a miss.

Churchill, much maligned by the modern shooting community, recommends a fairly open and narrow stance with toes at eleven and two o'clock. His argument for this is that the open stance not only allows the shooter more swing flexibility in either direction, which is aided by the narrower foot placement, it also sets the shoulder more square to the gun, which allows it to recoil into the meat in the pocket of the shoulder rather than against the joint, which has less mass. On overhead shots, he recommends winding up slightly on the back foot, and on left-to-right shots, the shooter winds up on the *right* foot as well, due to the narrow, open stance. This, and his recommendation of using guns with 25 inch barrels have contributed to his current lack of popularity, but Yardley points out in his book that his recommendations may work better for people of his body type, which was short and stout. After all, there were shooters of the time using his methods capable of shooting more than 100-straight with his sawed-off side-by-sides.

His instruction on target focus, eyes and hands are a little more conventional, with the main focus being on a proper mount to the target, where achieving the proper barrel speed (through proper target focus, balance and mount) will break the target or harvest the driven bird every time. He is very fastidious about explaining how every part of a person’s body has to be working exactly as prescribed, or hitting the target will be a stroke of luck. His famous demonstration of placing pegs a certain eye-distance to the side

of a target at different distances from the shooter is a pretty convincing way to argue against spending time on feet-in-front-of-target lead calculations. For example, if the peg is twenty yards away and one inch of eye-distance in front renders a three-foot target lead, then the peg at 40 yards is six feet in front of the target. Grab a range finder and try it at home!

Michael Yardley's "Positive Shooting" method is somewhat similar to Stanbury's in that the feet are lined up similarly and the muzzle is placed just below the line of the target before, and during, the mounting of the gun. The four most important steps in his method are: 1) Directing the eyes to where you first expect to see a target and calling for it 2) When visual contact is made, start moving the upper body and gun 3) Focus on the leading edge of the target "and the muzzles, directed by the coordinated action of both hands, move ahead naturally as the gun swings" 4) Fire the gun as the butt comes firmly to the shoulder, the shoulder coming slightly forward to the stock.

With Yardley, the lead picture can be unconscious on most conventional shots but he has found (like I many of us) that longer, faster or more difficult targets can require a conscious lead picture. He makes some very good points about difficult targets, one of the best being that lead pictures and swing speeds can be so deceptive that they require a person to practice them until they have most of the important ones neatly catalogued, easy retrievable at a the right moment from your target memory to win a shoot-off. Yardley takes a fairly holistic approach in his book, suggesting everything from breathing exercises, to weight training (a la Tiger), to eye exercises that have you tracing the lines where the wall meets the ceiling. He has an entire chapter titled "The Psychology of Shooting". He also runs through several of the popular shooting methods, such as John Bidwell's "move, mount and shoot" sustained lead technique. He recommends practicing his own three-step mounting technique, which he refers to as the "kata" in both fast and slow motion, like a tai-chi exercise.

The paragraph that I found most relevant to my situation goes as follows: "I have never believed in just going out and shooting a few with an instructor whose only function is to offer the odd useful tip. Too often... the shooter finds his shooting improves during the session, but reverts to mediocrity afterwards. I suspect there are two reasons for this. One is that the shooter does not know why he is going wrong because he has never been taught precisely what to do; and the other, is that the shooter is not performing on the basis of a disciplined routine.... A well learned (and taught) technique gives them something to fall back on when things go wrong; the purely instinctual shot never has the same advantage."

Now, I've been formally taught what to do by several very good instructors, but it is applying the routine to develop the technique that seems to cause improvement. With this, and maybe some luck, perhaps I can hit one or two of the going-away targets at the next shoot! I found all three of these books in this Anglo-Centric collection to be an interesting use of time and I'm sure that most of you who haven't read them already would be able to derive some interesting conclusions about your own technique from any one of them. Go back to the classics and give the magazines and websites a rest!

SPECIAL APPEAL

The Travelers support the **SCHOLASTIC CLAY SHOOTING TEAMS** of the Fairfield County Fish & Game Club and the Ye Ole Newgate Coon Club in many ways. However, there is a serious need to supply these good kids with ammunition. We are asking you to make a cash contribution or bring any amount of factory ammunition in 20 and 12 gauge to the shoot on Sunday. We will do the same when we visit the Coon Club in November. Be thoughtful and generous so we can keep these kids in the game.

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